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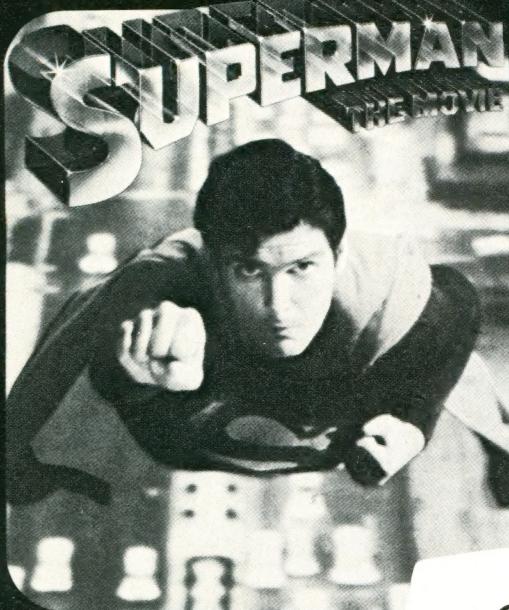
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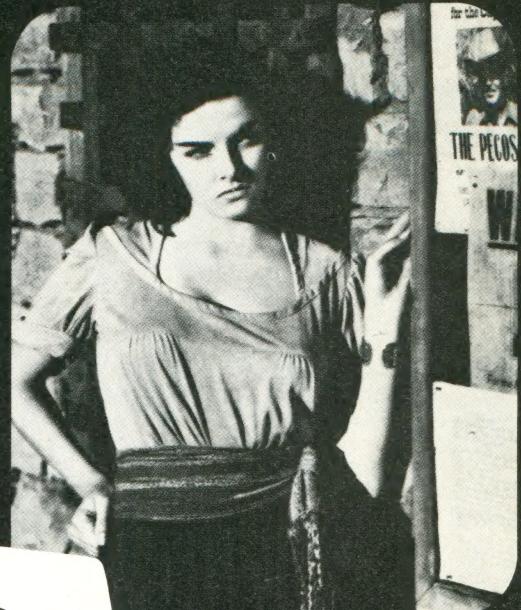
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may, 1981

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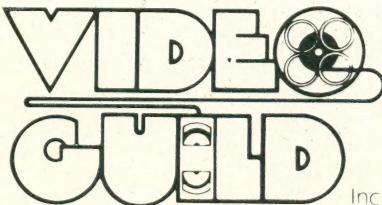
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8:00 CENTRAL TIME

A few more words about obsolescence.

Previously, this column has bemoaned obsolescent behavior on the part of video cassette recorder manufacturers: the elimination of the valuable X-1 recording speed on consumer Beta-format VCRs, and the elimination of the four-hour "LP" recording speed on a few six-hour VHS-format VCRs. Our sentiments have run along the lines of "the marketing whizzes that are responsible for such practices should be shot."

We are extremely sorry to report the obsolescence-syndrome has hit the laser optical videodisc field.

As even the most casual reader of our *Prima Facie* review section knows (awkward name, that), we have been highly supportive of the laser optical discs. Mind you, this support has not been extended over the other videodisc formats: the RCA capacitance players have just hit the stores, and the JVC VHD disc system will not reach the market until the end of this year.

No, our support for the optical videodisc player manufactured by Magnavox and Pioneer, and for the laser videodiscs manufactured by MCA, is solely based upon the performance of the machines and the software: repeatedly, we have said the laser optical system delivers the finest picture and sound of any home video system on the market. And we stand by those sentiments.

However, it is with a heavy heart—and with no little frustration—that we give you a very small preview of an article scheduled to run in the next issue of *Video Action*—one completed too late to make it into this month's edition.

The article, tentatively titled *Video Tape Vs. Videodisc*, consists of two interviews with the respective heads of the MCA prerecorded video tape and videodisc divisions, conducted by Associate Editor Bill Martin. We are excerpting—previewing—the portion with MCA Videodisc Marketing Vice-President Bud O'Shea: VA: You are now marketing one hour per side extended play videodiscs. The main drawback as I see it is that with extended play (CLV) discs, some of the disc player's special effects can not be used. Since the laser format's special effects are a major selling point for both the hardware and the software, I am wondering if you will be marketing your titles in the two

different modes—"regular" (CAV) play and extended play—so people will have a choice.

O'Shea: Almost all our feature films are now in the extended play format... we presently have no plans to put out different versions of the same title.

Mr. O'Shea, as a consumer who has plunked down some \$800.00 for an optical videodisc player, that comment makes me very angry. True, as a member of the press I have had exposure to the RCA system—priced nearly \$300.00 lower than the machines that playback your discs—and I believe the picture quality to be inferior on their machine—and your players have stereo, which is a plus, but I must admit the main reason why I bought an optical player is the special effects.

True, not all the special effects are lost on the extended play discs—only the frame indexing, 3X forward and reverse, freeze frame and single frame forward, and reverse. But those are four of the seven reasons why I prefer the optical system.

And let's face it. As Herb Schlosser points out in this issue, MCA does not have a hell of a lot of stereo laser discs out there on the market. Of the 15 discs I own, only two are in stereo. So this feature remains valuable more in its potential than in actuality.

Magnavox has a real expensive advertising campaign out there calling their laser optical videodisc player "gourmet video." I wonder if they are aware that some of their best courses are no longer of gourmet-class.

Luckily, Mr. O'Shea is mistaken about one thing: most of the optical videodiscs out on the market today are regular play. I presume, from his comments, that all or most all future MCA videodisc movie releases will be in the stripped-down extended play version.

That's too bad. I did not buy my laser videodisc player to play exercise discs in slow-motion. And I am mad as hell I won't be able to buy future film releases in the special effects format.

Unless you are mistaken about the lack of availability of movies in both regular and extended play formats, Mr. O'Shea, I sure hope you are. I'll bet the people who make laser optical videodisc players hope you are mistaken, too.

—Mike Gold,
Editor

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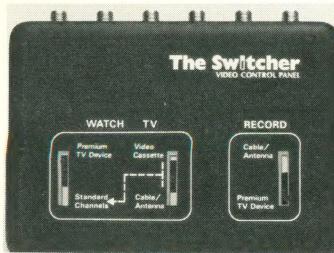
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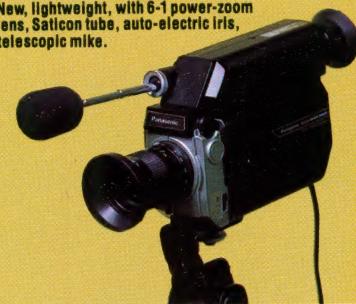


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re:ACTION

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As more television viewers become aware of the more subtle effects of watching television, more can be done to bring positive change to daily programming fare, as well as diminish the negative effects of harmful program content.

Ms. Ferdinand, the writer of "Kideo: Perspectives on Children's Television" (*Video Action*, March 1981) states in her article that "It is time to stop thinking of television merely as a product, an entertainer, an educator." Indeed, both adults and children need to learn about television as a product, an entertainer, an educator. They need to learn what it really is, what it is really doing, what they can do to make the best of it, and what they can do to change it. Parents and educators must teach children to look beyond the flickering images to the message—to see what they are being fed, and to learn what is missing from their screens as well.

The need for tools to assist parents and educators to reach this goal is obvious but until recently had gone unanswered. Our PTA TV Action Center has for several years managed a TV monitoring project which sensitizes its members and the general public to television concerns. We are developing and producing Critical Viewing Skills curricula for home and classroom use. And we are offering a "TV hotline" to help viewers learn more about how to handle TV concerns.

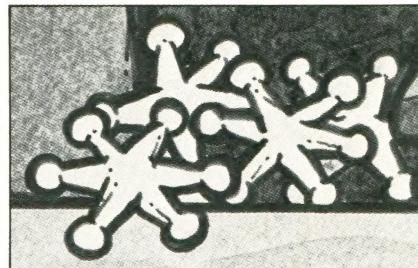
We applaud your interest and pursuit of the effects of television on the young and uncritical viewer.

Virginia V. Sparling
President, National PTA
Chicago, IL

. . . AND CON

Marilyn Ferdinand's brief discussion of some of the future prospects for children's television suffers, it seems to me, from the kind of information-overload which has so many of us spinning as we close out the 20th Century. While Ms. Ferdinand raises most of the important issues (the impact of commercials, violence, the lowest common denominator syndrome, racial and sexual stereotypes, the effects of television

watching on literacy, etc.) she waltzes around them as if answers must await either the final opinions of experts or the total reformation of American society. In view of the revolutionary rate at which electronic communications is developing, I doubt seriously that we can afford the patience for either development.



The fact of the matter is that no one knows much now—nor will they in the near future—about the impact of television on children. As is the case with so many other issues that face us, expert opinion could not be more divided: pick a position, and you can find a bona fide group of experts who support it. And while it is true that the commercialism, racism, et al depicted on children's television are reflections of their larger context, neither I nor my children have the time to wait for all of us to "create a better environment for it (television) to flourish in."

And, of course, the problem does not stop with present-day commercial television. By the time we gain a slight understanding of the impact of television on us, we'll all be thoroughly enmeshed in a new set of technologies (home computers, two-way television, cable, videodiscs, and the combinations thereof) whose effects we won't understand for another generation.

What then is there left for us to do? If the experts don't agree about the effects of television violence, and if we haven't discovered a means to eradicate violence from American society, are we simply to bemoan the fact that we're caught between a rock and a hard place? There are, I think, several alternatives—though there is hardly space here to explore them all fully.

What Ms. Ferdinand misses, I fear, is the resilience and power of each of us once we've decided to take as

much of our lives in our own hands as we can. My children, for example, are not overwhelmed by the television commercials they watch. In fact, though they are only seven and five years old, Adam and Colin are more likely to poke fun at an outrageous pitch than I. Nor do they simply succumb to the outrageous sexism of what they see. More often than not, they notice it, comment on it, and pass it off as a feature of television and life that ought to be different.

And there is the hub of my real concern over television in our children's future. Insofar as we are clear about our values—and fairly firm in our adherence to them—I can envision a future in which television, the new technologies that supplant it, and even American society as a whole become tolerable, if not even mildly healthy. As long as we know what we approve and what we don't, and have the individual strength to act on that knowledge, the confusions of the 20th Century may well give rise to a more humane and livable 21st.

Peter H. Wagschal
Director, Future Studies Program
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA

CHICAGO CABLE COMMENTS

T.B. Martin's interview with Robert Wussler ("Cable Makes Its Move," *Video Action*, March 1981) was most enlightening. Unfortunately, I live in Chicago, one of the last major U.S. metropolitan areas to remain unwired for cable, so I am, alas, unable to see all these wonders Mr. Wussler relates.

However, I do get all the same network blather that the rest of the country gets. All it takes is one night's viewing to realize there just isn't much there, so it is nice to see someone come and call the nets on all this pap. True, Mr. Wussler's interest is, to say the least, vested, but one thing is certain: cable fare cannot be any worse than the programming offered up by NBC, ABC, and CBS.

In fact, it sounds like it is a hell of a lot better.

Ric Addyson
Chicago, IL

A WORD IN THEIR EAR

Now that Richard Burton's highly informative series on the British teletext systems is done with, I simply must write to express my thanks, jealousy, and outrage. The thanks is for the series itself, and the jealousy is that England has teletext—several different systems in fact—while we have none.

The outrage is for the FCC and their sit-on-their-hands attitude about teletext. While they sit about Washington making decisions that affect us daily, they neglect to let us in on the process. Why is it so difficult for them to make a relatively simple decision and get the ball rolling? How come we are, as usual, left out in the bureaucratic cold while they take their sweet time giving us what we want?

Doug Norris
Elkins Park, PA

VIDEO MAGIC

After spending a baker's dozen Sunday evenings watching—and enjoying—Carl Sagan's excellent *Cosmos* series on PBS, I was at a bit of a loss to figure out just how they managed to put all that great stuff on the screen. Ann DeLarye's article on chromakey and magican put it all in perspective for me—and in a simple, straight-forward way that even the layest of laymen could understand.

I'd also like to throw in a quick word on the look of *Video Action*, which is clean and highly readable. Sometimes the artwork accompanying the articles really blows me away, especially the work of Scott Gustafson. I've enjoyed his illustrations since the first issue, and his piece that went with the *Video Magic* article was the best yet.

Arlene Wasserman
Cleveland, OH

WHO WON?

Since the videodisc player is so new to the buying public, I was interested in finding out what the differences were in the three systems before making my purchase. The Great Videodisc Showdown served to clear the air quite nicely. What it didn't tell me, however, was who won.

B. Schwartz
New York, NY

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home Computers

The Well-Read Computer User

By Bob Soron

MY LAST TWO COLUMNS should by now, have given you a pretty good idea of how computers work and what the jargon is. You probably want to learn more about the world of computers in general. Here are a few magazines and books to start on.

These publications, by the way, are all recommended with two qualifications. First, they may not be right for you. This is a diverse batch, and if you pick up a few issues of a magazine and find it doesn't interest you, don't worry—there are plenty more.

That is the second point. All of these books and magazines are fine for their interest groups, but there are plenty that I cannot mention here. If you see a book or magazine that isn't listed, by all means check it out—maybe even drop me a note so I'll include it in updates.

If you're new to computers, one magazine you'll probably appreciate is *onComputing* (P.O. Box 307, Martinsville, NJ 08836; one year, quarterly, \$8.50). It is aimed specifically at newcomers, with plenty of reviews and tutorials. Each issue has a glossary of new terms that you will encounter while reading it. The writers do not write down to the readers—everyone's equal here (as in all computer publications).

If you're interested in how to use your computer—and how others are using theirs—you will appreciate *Creative Computing* (P.O. Box 789-M, Morristown, NJ 07960; one year, monthly, \$20). Each issue has a number of evaluations and profiles, general interest articles, games (with listings ready for you to type into your computer), and columns for specific computers and interests. Many of the decisions I've made about my own computer equipment has come from information and reviews in *Creative*.

When you simply want an interesting game to play, or need some help to get around that bug in your program, go to *SoftSide* (P.O. Box 68, Milford, NH 03055; one year,

monthly, \$24). Most of each issue is filled with programs to type into your computer (the Apple, Atari, and TRS-80 are featured). Other articles in each issue present programming tips and reviews of books and software.

And, after you have finished scratching your head wondering how in heck your computer does all that, turn to *BYTE* (P.O. Box 590, Martinsville, NJ 08836; monthly, one year, \$18). *BYTE*'s specialty is the workings of computers; it gets somewhat technical at times, and there is plenty of jargon, but it is often the first place you will read about something. Since each issue is at least 350 pages, it is quite a bargain.

Somewhere between *BYTE* and *Creative Computing* is *kilobaud Microcomputing* (P.O. Box 997, Farmingdale, NY 11737; monthly, one year, \$25); it features both "how-to-do" and "what-to-do" articles. There are also general interest articles, features, and reviews. If you have one of the smaller or less well-known model computers, this may be a good place to look for information.

There are also plenty of special-interest computer magazines, primarily those devoted to one computer or microprocessor. These occasionally get very technical, and since the magazine assumes the reader has the computer it is discussing, there is much more jargon. But these are great places to learn about the advantages and shortcomings of specific computers (particularly shortcomings—these magazines love to print articles telling users how to get around some limiting feature). There are far too many, and all are too specialized, for me to mention any—but look into a few.

Most of these magazines tend to feature book reviews, and to be perfectly honest, that is the best place to find out what is being published. Books by their nature are specific in content; the field changes so rapidly that sometimes a book is obsolete before it is published. However, there are some books that are general—and

timeless—enough to be mentioned here.

One is *The BASIC Handbook*, by David A. Lien (CompuSoft Publishing, P.O. Box 19669, San Diego, CA 92119; \$14.95). This is an encyclopedia of the language BASIC, and features virtually every command, statement, function, definition, example, and alternative if your computer does not "have" that word. Over 50 dialects of BASIC are represented. If you like to type in programs from magazines to your computer, you will eventually need this book.

An indispensable series of books is *The Secret Guide to Computers* (\$3.70 per volume, information from Russ Walter, 92 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02116). When completed, the new 10th edition of this series will consist of eight volumes (three have already been published), each discussing one facet of computing. The books pack incredible amounts of information into a format that is easy to use and—unique in the computer world—fun.

Walter's sense of humor makes the dull stuff painless and the interesting parts enjoyable. These books are used as references by everyone from the three commercial networks to the computer companies themselves. And, if you buy just one book, Russ has a free, 24-hour telephone consultation service. This series is almost a kind of life insurance; I can not recommend it more highly.

If you want to familiarize yourself with specific systems before you buy, you can generally purchase the computer manuals by themselves for a few bucks. They may answer many questions.

If you have any questions, feel free to send them to me c/o *Video Action*, 21 W. Elm, Chicago, IL 60610. I cannot respond personally, but eventually I will have a column devoted to answering questions. Next month, we will talk about one of the best places to get information: computer clubs.

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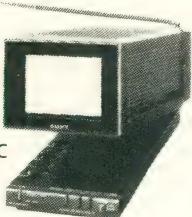
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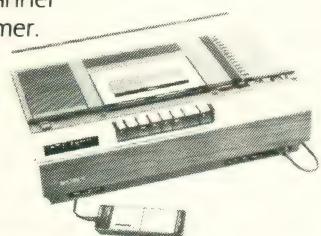
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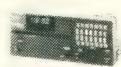
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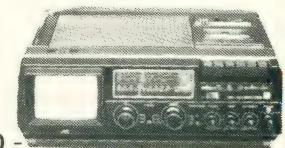
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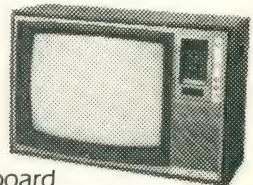
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DOWN ON MEMORY LANE

Q: Enclosed are photocopies of correspondence to one of your advertisers, Memory Lane, wherein I've asked them to send me material I have paid for but not received. My check was processed by them, I have since written them twice, and as of this date I have not heard a word... nearly three months after my initial order. If, in some way, you can get attention for me from this merchant I would appreciate it. G.E.M., Rowland Heights, CA.

A: You, dear reader, are not the only one to be jerked around by Memory Lane. As a matter of fact, *Video Action* itself has been left holding the bag for all the advertising from this "merchant" which has appeared in our pages. We have taken the matter to a collection agency; and we are taking up your situation with postal authorities and the respective Better Business Bureaus. Beyond that, all we can do at this point in time is tell our readers: BEWARE OF MEMORY LANE OF LUBBOCK, TEXAS! We will keep you advised.

EUROPEAN TAPE TROUBLE

Q: There are thousands of American military and civilian people living in Europe—particularly in Germany. And there are also a large number of English-speaking people living in the non-English countries. What can these people buy in relation to programming for their PAL systems? Are there places in the USA that can perform the conversion of U.S. films on the NTSC system into PAL? Do you have any ideas to help us solve this problem? E.D.P., Munich, Germany.

A: First off, you should not have much trouble purchasing PAL prerecorded material in Europe. The video revolution has hit with equal intensity on both sides of the Atlantic. The last Consumer Electronics Show had more PAL material in one place than you might imagine. Perhaps if you are located in an area where there are no video stores, you should pick up one

of the British video magazines like *Video World* that has advertising from mail-order dealers.

If, on the other hand, you are thinking to trade material with an American correspondent after the American material has been converted to PAL—forget it. Yes indeed, a system exists for performing this task. There are about a half dozen machines capable of this. Unfortunately, the last time we checked a couple months back the fees started at \$139 a foot. For that price you would be better off buying a U.S. television set, the necessary electrical conversion materials, and ordering your software through overseas mail.

You can rent or borrow NTSC tapes and equipment and make camera-copies, but the quality is shaky at best. You might want to consider buying one of the VCR units that will playback either NTSC or PAL tapes onto their respective-system monitors. Details would be available from any major European home video store.

COPYGUARD QUERY

Q: I have several questions I cannot seem to get answers for from local video dealers. The questions concern copyguard signals installed in prerecorded tapes by their manufacturers.

At the present time I do not own a VCR, but I do intend to purchase one within the next several weeks, probably an RCA VET 650.

With the high cost of purchasing prerecorded material, it is I think fairly sensible, economically, to rent the tapes rather than purchase them. However, I would like to be able to retain some of these tapes for my own collection. I understand that there are copyright laws involved. I would like to know, since I am thinking of buying two VCRs, the following:

- (1) Do all, or most, prerecorded tapes incorporate copyguards?
- (2) Do any of the so-called eliminators/enhancers/image stabilizers perform well enough to override the copyguard?
- (3) I have been told that some of the newer model VCRs override the

copyguard on most prerecorded material, providing the newer VCR is used to record, not play, the tapes. Is this true? And would it apply to the RCA VET 650?

Since most of the dealers in my area also sell and rent prerecorded material, they are a bit reluctant to answer these questions. B.M., New Whiteland, IN

A: Most, but not all, prerecorded tapes do incorporate copyguards of one sort or another. Most copyguard eliminators will do the trick, although older devices might have some difficulty getting past some newer copyguard systems.

Most newer VCRs will automatically override most copyguard systems if used in the manner you noted; they will also help stabilize copyguarded tapes on your television set.

However, a word to the wise is in order. Ethics—and a sense of fair play—force us to remind you that such unauthorized duplication may be in violation of the copyright law. Whereas you most likely would not be hauled into court for simple home duplication of material, you just might and your tapes and equipment could be confiscated if over-zealous members of the law enforcement establishment decide to make an example. They have yet to hassle more than a handful of home duplicators who do not sell their illegally-duplicated tapes, but then again, you would not want to be part of that handful.

WHERE TO GET IT

Q: One of my favorite pictures of all time is JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS. I have gone to a few video stores but have not found it available on video cassette. Do you know if such a version exists and where I might be able to purchase it? C.N., Mason City, IA

A: *Jason and the Argonauts* is available. According to the *Video Source Book*, you can get it from Time-Life Video—if the tape is still "in-print." Contact them at: 1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

The Omen • Breaking Away • Norma Rae • The French Connection
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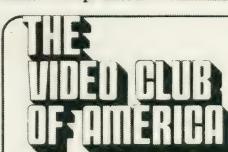
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Newsline

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NEW PRODUCTS

AND WE THOUGHT THERE WAS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

The folks at RCA research and development have been awfully busy of late, adding no less than five new products to the company's line of video equipment.

First off is RCA's largest color television receiver to date, a huge 50-inch projection model with an equally huge price tag of \$3199.95.

And, just to balance the big with the small, another new addition to their television line is the nine-inch EFR 293 ColorTrak receiver. Available in a silver finish with a weatherband radio and AC/DC capability, it carries an optional retail price of \$409.95. Much in the same vein is the similar, but lower priced, EFR 291. This model is available in gray or white but does not

include the weatherband radio or AC/DC capability. Its suggested retail is \$349.95.

The RCA home video cassette re-



corder line has received a new member with the "convertible" VHS model VFP170. The 11 pound VCR functions as both an in-home player and portable recorder. According to the company, its light weight—which also includes the battery pack—makes the

VFP170 the lightest portable home recorder now available.

Priced at a suggested \$1400, the unit includes such features as a 14-day programmable memory, electronic tuning, stop action, two times speed, variable slow motion, frame advance, and full function remote control. Its modular system consists of a programmable tuner/timer, and a separate six-hour recorder that can operate as a portable for over an hour with its own built-in rechargeable battery.

Last, but not least in the heart of RCA, is the Model CC010 deluxe color video camera. It features an f1.8-8x1 two-speed power zoom lens, electronic viewfinder, fade-in/fade-out capability, power saver switch, boom microphone, and automatic manual iris control. It also has a compatibility switch that makes it fully functional with virtually all VHS-format portable VCRs and retails for \$1050.

SIX HOURS IS A LOT OF BUGS BUNNY CARTOONS

The newest addition to the General Electric catalog of video cassette recorders is the 1VCR1006. The machine offers up to six hours of continuous



recording or playback per VHS cassette, a video scan control that allows you to scan a tape at 10 times normal speed, pushbutton electronic tuning for up to 12 VHF and UHF channels for off-channel recording, instant stop/pause control for the easy editing of unwanted programming, and an audio dubbing feature that allows you to replace a program's original sound track with audio from another source, such as a record, radio, or microphone.

Those features are usually found on upscale VCRs, but the GE machine is more attractive because of its price tag: \$899.95.

TAPE HIGHLIGHTS

The folks at Fuji Photo recently

unveiled their newest product—video tape.

There is nothing new about Fuji producing tape—they have been doing it for years. What makes this particular video cassette tape new is the way it is made. The new generation tape is described as a "fine grain" Beridox magnetic particle tape.

The company claims the cassette has an improved binder system which, in conjunction with the Beridox formulation, produces clearer, sharper color recordings even after numerous passes by the record and playback heads of a VCR. Fuji also believes its production process ensures the tape's tensil strength which means the tape is more resistant to stretching, thus eliminating skewing.

The Fuji Beridox tape is available in both six hour VHS and four & one-half hour Beta formats and retails for \$26.95.



YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE

The Acme-Lite Manufacturing Company of Skokie, Illinois has a new line of video lights available for home tapers who already own the camera and can provide the action. They can also be used for studio lighting applications.

The light units are available with video camera fillings for easy use. Among the several models Acme-Lite offers are the 600 and 710, pictured here. The 600 has a six-inch aluminum reflector for broad flat lighting and is equipped with a powerful 600-watt, 75-hour quartz lamp for use on 110-v AC circuits.

The larger 710 features a rectangular

aluminum reflector with a lightweight heat-proof phenolic housing complete with barndoors for illumination control. The 1000 watt, 75-hour quartz lamp operates on 110 volt AC. Both models are mountable on a lightstand or camera bracket and retail for \$54.95 and \$95.95, respectively.

REAGAN'S NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH A NEW CABINET

The video furniture keeps on coming as more and more people find themselves with a need to put all that brand new video equipment somewhere. The latest is from Gusdorf, with their model #1915 cabinet/storage unit.

The #1915 puts your video hardware and software in a single compact unit which stands 45 $\frac{1}{4}$ " high, 30" wide, and 20" deep. The slip-in compartment houses a 19-inch (or less) television set and the storage cabinet below is designed with a retractable shelf that allows a VCR or videodisc player to slide out for easy access.

The Gusdorf cabinet is available in a pecan finish with a Rendura coating, or in walnut, and retails for around \$235.

VCRs & DISCS

NOW THAT REALLY BOWLS ME OVER!

Go team go!

The sales figures of Super Bowl video cassettes from NFL Films may be indicative of which of the 15 Super Bowl games football fans—at least those with VCRs—consider the best.

Was it Super Bowl III, the ever-popular upset of the Baltimore Colts by the New York Jets? Or maybe it is the suspense-filled Super Bowl V where the Colts pulled three points ahead of the Dallas Cowboys in the final seconds of play?

No way.

The winner is Super Bowl XIV, the 1980 Pittsburgh Steelers-Los Angeles Rams donnybrook with the latter's 31-19 win. Herewith a list, in order of popularity and with final scores, of NFL Films' best sellers:

1. Super Bowl XIV—Pittsburgh Steelers 31, Los Angeles Rams 19
2. Super Bowl XIII—Pittsburgh Steelers 35, Dallas Cowboys 31
3. Super Bowl III—New York Jets 16, Baltimore Colts 7
4. Super Bowl X—Pittsburgh Steelers 21, Dallas Cowboys 17
5. Super Bowl V—Baltimore Colts 16, Dallas Cowboys 13
6. Super Bowl VI—Dallas Cowboys 24, Miami Dolphins 3
7. Super Bowl XII—Dallas Cowboys 27, Denver Broncos 10

(cont.)

It has finally happened—a television so small, so thin you can fit it into your back pocket.

By Mike Gold with Richard Burton

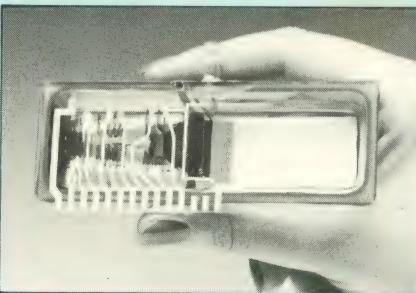
By now, major technological advances should not shock us—particularly those in the realm of new video. After all, hardly anything discussed in the pages of *Video Action* was in the marketplace six years ago.

And predictions of television sets so small you could carry them anywhere have been bounding out of the media like pop corn out of a popper. Yet when somebody actually manufactured a prototype and announced plans for production, the effect was indeed shocking.

Sinclair Research, of Cambridge England, recently announced a \$10 million, four year capital investment program for their Microvision black-and-white pocket TV. They are best known for their Sinclair ZX80 personal computer, which sells over one-eighth million units per year.

The Sinclair Microvision 2700, the tiny set in question, measures six inches by four inches, and is only one inch thick. It weighs, according to the folks at Sinclair, "just a few ounces."

Of course, what makes the set unique—and indeed, possible—is its flat screen



picture tube. Measuring four inches by two inches and three-quarters of an inch thick, the tube is three times brighter than the conventional picture tube yet requires only one quarter to one tenth of the power.

The tube is assembled from two sheets of glass: a flat front plate and a vacuum-formed backing plate. The electron gun—the gizmo in the tube that shoots the image out to the phosphor coating, dot by dot, which in turn forms the picture—rests to the side of the screen instead of behind it. The phosphor screen itself is coated on the interior of the backing sheet of glass: it is viewed from the same side that the electrons strike. Sinclair Research believes this creates a far brighter picture.



This tube assembly has fewer parts than your basic conventional picture tube, allowing for lower-cost mass production.

Manufacture of both the tube and the television set will take place in the Timex ("it keeps on ticking") Corporation plant in Scotland. Their initial goal is to produce one million tubes a year by a staff of 250 people: by the end of 1985, the Sinclair people hope to employ four times that many workers and increase production geometrically. Company owner Clive Sinclair selected Timex because of "its renowned ability to design and make automatic production machinery and its eminence in precision engineering."

A major United States retail chain—exactly which one is a closely guarded secret—has already placed an order for over 300,000 units during the first year of production.

The Sinclair Microvision 2700 will retail in England for around \$100.00. If its size and convenience are not sufficiently impressive, one should be aware that the set also picks up FM radio stations, and it could be used to pick up television signals—specifically, those incompatible with both the U.S. and the British broadcasting standards—throughout much of the world.

Next up for the Sinclair Research people will be a program to modify their flat screen tube for projection television systems. Believing their projection system is equally capable of providing a far brighter picture, Sinclair foresees a three-tube projection television system with a 50-inch diagonal full-color display. "The optics and electronics," Sinclair notes, "could fit into a shoe-box-sized unit projecting onto a wall-mounted screen."

Now if the Sinclair people will only turn their attention to manufacturing equally small video cassette recorders...

8. Super Bowl IX—Pittsburgh Steelers
16, Minnesota Vikings 6
9. Super Bowl I—Green Bay Packers
35, Kansas City Chiefs 10
10. Super Bowl VII—Miami Dolphins
14, Washington Redskins 7
11. Super Bowl XI—Oakland Raiders
32, Minnesota Vikings 14
12. Super Bowl II—Green Bay Packers
33, Oakland Raiders 14
13. Super Bowl VIII—Miami Dolphins
24, Minnesota Vikings 7
14. Super Bowl IV—Kansas City
Chiefs 23, Minnesota Vikings 7

Which just goes to show, the plays are the things!

NATO GOES VIDEO

The National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) is very concerned with a new trend hitting the home video industry—the marketing of video cassettes of feature films by such companies as Magnetic Video only 90 days after their theatrical release.

NATO is asking other companies not to follow Magnetic Video (a subsidiary of 20th Century-Fox) in this practice. The other distributors of prerecorded cassettes, however, are making no promises to the theater owners, preferring instead to sit tight and see how the new Fox plan works on their initial offerings, *Nine to Five* and *Stunt Man*.

Still, even the theater owners do not seem to be able to get together for a totally unified effort. Some theaters are finding the sale of video cassettes in their lobbies to be too lucrative to halt. Porno theaters are increasing their revenues through lobby sales of not only sexually explicit material but non-pornographic features as well, according to David Friedman, chairman of the Adult Film Association of America. In fact, lobby sales in adult movie houses break down to 65% X-rated material and 35% general fare, a reverse of the sales situation in video stores.

Considering the amount of money involved in the sale of prerecorded cassettes of all kinds, it is not surprising that this NATO group is anxious to reach some sort of treaty.

LOOK, MA—NO VCR!

Hitachi has a surprise in store that will most definitely whet the appetite of even the most jaded video hardware aficionado: the Mag Camera.

So far, the Mag Camera exists only in prototype form, but when it hits the market it will put most other video cameras to shame. As the name implies, the system is a color video camera with a video cassette recorder and playback unit all in one. That's the good news. The bad news is that the

Hitachi all-in-one gives us yet another—and we are beginning to lose count—incompatible video tape format.

The Mag Camera employs a 1/4-inch tape housed in a cassette which is only slightly larger than an audio tape cassette. The handheld unit weighs a mere six pounds and will feature a rechargeable battery pack.

Just to sweeten things up a bit more, the unit has a two hour recording and playback capacity—as well as stereo sound, something not

available in standard type VCRs. Hitachi believes the smaller 1/4-inch tape will produce a picture superior in quality to 1/2-inch tapes because of "an increase in video composite recording density."

The prototype Mag Camera was unveiled at last January's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas and cost the company a cool \$1,000,000 to produce. Here's hoping they can get the price down a bit before it hits the marketplace.

THE ADVENT OF BETA VCRS

The Advent Corporation has announced the signing of an agreement with the Sony Corporation of America to produce a Beta format VCR with stereo sound with Dolby C Audio Noise Reduction.

Advent chose the Beta system after a great deal of consideration to various technical aspects of the machine. We quote: "The growth of the VHS market in the 1970s was largely due to one feature: longer playing time. At Advent, we believe that size, weight, appear-

GREATER EXPECTATIONS

Despite the rather precarious state of the economy, some businesses are booming—and it should come as no surprise that one of those boom areas is the home video market.

By last year's end, Americans had bought just over 2,000,000 video cassette recorders and more than 3,000,000 prerecorded tapes to play on them. The latter figure pushes the prerecorded business past the \$150,000,000 a year mark—and that is just the beginning.

Despite the massive amount of money being made, most industry insiders consider it a spit in the ocean compared to what they expect the market to be just a couple years down the road.

Andre Blay, president and founder of the largest marketer of prerecorded video cassettes and laser optical discs in the country, Magnetic Video Corporation, sees the cassette market quadrupling in just two years.

Despite the fact that these high sales are better than some industry analysts expected—in fact, some brands of VCRs are experiencing shortages in the marketplace—a feeling is descending on VCR manufacturers that before their business becomes a mainstream American industry, the VCR must cease to be a rich man's toy.

Current demographic studies of VCR owners indicate that the profile of the average video cassette recorder

ance, and most of all, performance will become far more important to a consumer's choice than simply playing time. VCRs will be perceived as high fidelity instruments both in video and in audio and the market share of the future will be determined by performance."

Advent believes the Beta format produces a better quality picture, especially at the longer playing times. The stereo VCR will be unveiled to the public this summer and will be available to consumers late this year.

It Beta be good.

owner has not changed since the introduction of the Betamax over five years ago: well-educated males with substantial incomes who tend, also, to subscribe to one form or another of pay or cable television if available. This profile is backed up by the fact that the more expensive, special effects-laden models are in greater demand.

VCR manufacturers hope the introduction of lower priced, stripped-down models will result in the penetration of their machines into lower- and middle-income households. With three types of relatively inexpensive videodisc players breathing down the neck of the only slightly older VCR market by year's end, various retailers like Montgomery Ward and J.C. Penney are now pushing the cheaper recorders over those in the \$900 and up range which may not compete well with disc players.

The advent of lower income households owning VCRs is expected to benefit the popularity of cassette rentals as well. The current thinking is that VCR owners in the \$12-\$16,000 income bracket will be unwilling—if not unable—to shell out \$50 to \$90 for prerecorded cassettes.

CRYSTAL BALL— WALL STREET STYLE

The Wall Street firm of Wertheim and Co. has issued an enthusiastic report on the future of the infant videodisc business. "Quite spectacular"

is the way they describe the industry and the projected size of the market.

Based on what it sees as the supremacy of the RCA grooved capacitance videodisc system's larger software catalog and extensive—not to mention expensive—advertising campaign, the Wertheim report says the House that Nipper built is their "prime candidate for investment in the field at present"—NBC's lack of success notwithstanding.

The firm's enthusiasm does not stop at RCA either. The authors of the report predict that within the next 20 years virtually every home in the nation will be equipped with a disc player. The high sales of VCRs this country has enjoyed the past couple years, they feel, is merely a prelude to the mass acceptance of discs and the machines to play them.

In short, says Wertheim and Company, "the video revolution has begun in earnest" and it is time for investors to get on the bandwagon or be left behind.

What excites the Wall Street boys is the many strengths of the videodisc system. Unlike video tapes, discs are expected to sell for an average of under \$20 each (in 1980 currency) for full-length material, and even less for shorter presentations. Another strong point is "the motion picture industry has embraced the videodisc, since it solves an important problem of copyright protection." The disc "cannot easily be pirated, since the mastering and replication . . . is a complex technology requiring sophisticated and expensive capital equipment. Video tape duplication, by contrast, can be done in the back of a van with relatively inexpensive and readily available equipment."

The study predicts the videodisc market for software and hardware alike will reach a staggering \$8,000,000,000 by 1990, with well over half that figure representing disc sales alone.

PACK UP YOUR RECORDERS IN YOUR OLD KIT BAG . . .

MCA Videocassette Incorporated soon will be altering their marketing strategies to reflect these changing economic times. They plan to start marketing their software through direct mail sales and bookstores.

Spencer Gifts of Atlantic City, New Jersey will be offering MCA video cassettes through their mail order catalog, which already offers customers MCA DiscoVision laserdisc features. MCA has also decided to place their product in bookstores and is even now negotiating such an agree-

ment with an as-yet-unnamed major chain.

This new tactic, though not a complete shift from the already established video retail outlets, comes at a time when many in-the-know industry spokesmen expect such economic factors as overstocked inventories, the rapid growth of the cassette rental industry, and inadequate cash flow to cause anywhere from 10% to 25% of this country's estimated 5000 software dealers to pack up their tents. Joe Cohen, president of the National Association of Recording Merchandisers, expects the rate of atrophy to be even higher: perhaps as much as 50% by year's end.

Various factors besides cash flow



DOES PREISS/WATERHOUSE KNOW ABOUT THIS?

You can't have an entertainment medium without somebody wanting to hand out awards.

Of course, video music is no exception, especially now with the announcement of the first Musical Videoclip Awards at the Midem Music Fair held recently in Cannes, France. The musical presentations were of the promotional variety and are not readily available to the home video market at this time. You might have caught some of them if you own a VCR or happened to make the rounds of the various video or electronic shows. A few have even shown up on such late-night rock television shows as *Rockworld* and *Rock Concert*.

And so, without any further ado, the winners are:

* David Bowie's "Ashes to Ashes" from RCA, which won the grand prize for Best Video.

and start-up costs for new retailers will contribute to the decline in the ranks. Retailers who wish to run rental programs must purchase numerous copies of popular features that need a long period of repeated rentals to pay back the investment. Many are discovering they cannot afford to keep such large inventories on hand even though these inventories are a necessity. Once again, it is a case of Catch-22 for which there is no easy answer.

Another thorn in the side of the ailing retailers is the shift in payment terms offered by many video cassette wholesalers and distributors: some have started demanding payment within 30 days, as opposed to the old policy of 60 to 90 days.

* Best International Production went to director Keith McMillan for Kate Bush's "Baboooshka" (Pathé-Marconi/EMI).

* "Si J'étais President" (Carrere) as Best French Production, directed by John Roseman, and produced by performer Gerard Lenorman.

* Hilly Michael's "Calling All Girls" (Warner Brothers/WEA Records), directed by Gary Gutierrez tied with the Buggles' "Elstree" (Island/Phonogram), directed by John Roseman for the Best Directed category.

* Best Performance by an International Artist went to the aforementioned "Baboooshka" performer, Kate Bush.

* D.A. Robertson's "Flight 19" (Elektra/Asylum/WEA Records), with scenario by Robertson and Bryan Grant, won the award for Best Scenario.

HIGH DENSITY/LOW COST

While the way is being paved for the potentially big videodisc market by RCA's capacitance-stylus system player and the Magnavox/Pioneer laser optical machine, the Video High Density (VHD) system from the Victor Company of Japan, GE, Matsushita, Quasar, and Thorn-EMI is waiting in the wings with a retail price they believe will send the competition packing.

The VHD's patent holders expect to have 30,000 of their units in the market by the end of this year. What gives them the edge, they believe, is their machine's retail cost to wholesalers reflecting manufacturers' costs of about \$250 per unit as compared to that of around \$450 per unit for the optical machine.

This pricing policy does not necessarily mean the VHD videodisc player is the superior system, just that it is more affordable to the average consumer. Still, considering the state of

the dollar these days, that could mean more in the marketplace than special features and software . . . presuming the three-way competition doesn't kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

F.Y.I.

To set the record straight as to which companies are committed to the manufacture and/or distribution of which format videodisc players:

The capacitance (CED) discers are RCA, Zenith, Sears, Wards, Sanyo, Hitachi, J.C. Penney, Sharp, Toshiba, and Radio Shack.

On the laser/optical side are Magnavox, Pioneer, Sylvania, Philco, Advent, Gold Star, and Sansung.

And, finally, those behind the as-yet-unreleased video high density (VHD) players are General Electric, Quasar, Panasonic, JVC, and Sansui (which may yet jump the fence and get into the CED format).

Just thought you'd like to know . . .

THEY'RE BELIEVERS!

Michael Nesmith, chairman of the board of the Pacific Arts Corporation and, yes, formerly a member of the television rock group, The Monkees, has announced that henceforth, his company will be placing all of its resources behind the new—and hopefully prosperous—field of "video records."

The Carmel, California outfit will immediately cease production of all phonograph records. Initially, they will issue prerecorded video cassette material, with their first visual/audio offering, *An Evening With Sir William Martin*, now on the market.

Pacific Arts is the first recording outfit around to make such a heavy, wholehearted commitment to the home video music genre, and they are not stopping with video tape, either. Nesmith says they plan to get into the disc field as well, and he expects Pacific Arts will be issuing stereo video cassettes when conditions are ripe.

It is nice to see that the lad has stopped monkeeing around.

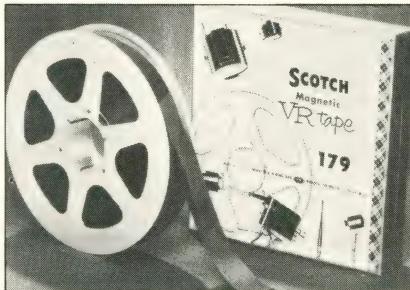
AND WE DIDN'T EVEN SEND A CARD!

Ever since the introduction of the home video cassette recorder some years back, we have taken the video tape to heart. That is why we feel it is only right we acknowledge an important milestone in the humble tape's existence: its 25th birthday.

Next to nuclear power and antibiotics, it is difficult to imagine another relatively recent discovery that has touched our lives so pervasively—except, of course, the television. The 3M Corporation, video tape's proud papa, unveiled its offspring in April of 1956 with the first recording on magnetic tape at the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters convention at Chicago's Conrad Hilton Hotel.

The crude premiere tape employed a two-inch quad video tape which used 30 square inches to record a single second of video information. Soon after, the television networks began transmitting delayed telecasts to prime time audiences in each time zone on a regular basis. Historians will be interested to note that the first use of tape was on CBS's November 30, 1956 airing of their nightly *Douglas Edwards and the News* program from New York. CBS was able to replay the broadcast three hours later from CBS Television City in Hollywood for the viewers on the West Coast.

A mere 18 months after video tape's formal introduction, over 100 stations had video tape recorders; within five years, nearly 400 stations—servicing 90% of the American viewing public



were thus equipped.

Of course, awe of this new technology was not the sole reason for its widespread use: there were economic considerations as well. The cost of a program hour on tape was a mere \$3 as opposed to \$88 for film. Another perk was—and is—magnetic tape's ability to be used over and over. It requires no processing time, and it gives television presentations that "live" look.

Advertisers soon jumped on the video tape bandwagon. The first commercial to appear on tape was from the Florists' Telegraph Delivery Association and was shown during the May 2, 1958 broadcast of Edward R. Murrow's *Person to Person* program.

Soon thereafter, tape was used in a way we now call "interactive": the Los Angeles Rams football team taped the first half of a September 1958 game and studied it at half-time in order to help map out their second-half strategy.

Owners of VCRs and others can see the current effects of video tape. The first video tape recorders weighed nearly 900 pounds and incorporated 160 vacuum tubes. It was not until 1962 that RCA came out with a somewhat less cumbersome, fully transistorized video recorder. The following year, Ampex marketed the first solid-state VTR. However, it took another 13 years for Sony to introduce the first home video cassette recorder. Last year, over 800,000 VCRs were sold along with millions of miles of blank and prerecorded video tape.

You've come a long way, baby. Happy birthday.

CABLE

CULTURALLY ILL

The Public Broadcasting Service's cultural pay cable effort appears to be well on the way to the launching pad, where after blast-off it will bring cable viewers the best of the best entertainment.

As currently envisioned, the Public Subscriber Network (PSN) will feature performances by many of the country's major symphony orchestras, dance troupes, operas, and theatrical organizations, as well as programming involving museums and educational institutions. And the cost for all this culture being brought into your living room? As it currently stands, PSN's estimated 360,000 subscribers will pay between \$10 and \$13 each month, with programs being underwritten in part by brief corporate messages between presentations.

The above scenario is currently being mulled over by the various stations in the PBS net and will be put to a vote by the system's directors. Should the plan be accepted—and the public stations are less than pleased at the prospect of sibling competition—PSN will join three other culturally-oriented pay cable networks already moving towards air dates: the independently produced Bravo network, and a pair of advertiser-supported offerings from CBS and ABC.

PBS president Lawrence Grossman envisions the cable service's expected audience as, "small but passionate and intensely loyal . . . and willing to pay for our programs as they pay for tickets to the Metropolitan Opera or the Joffrey Ballet." In other words, a select but decidedly upscale audience.

Grossman also sees some future additional income for the financially strapped PBS network—which faces large-scale cutbacks in government subsidies—through the sale of pre-recorded video cassettes and discs of

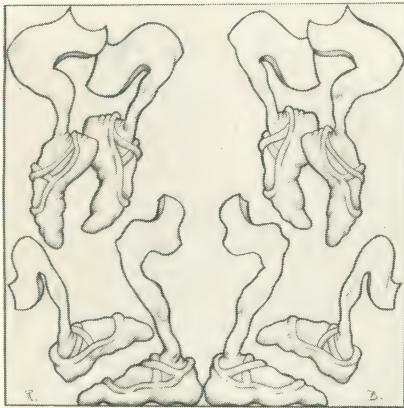
their programming.

PSN is scheduled to begin—or should we say open?—sometime in 1983 and by 1990 could be reaching an estimated 1,225,000 subscribers while it rakes in \$158,000,000 in income. That is about half the number of “subscribers” PBS now reaches through its regular telethon fund raising efforts.

Despite these big numbers, PBS is anything but healthy these days and the prognosis does not look much better: it is a sure bet that the government will be cutting back

severely on its arts-related philanthropy in the face of current bad economic conditions. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which controls the government's dole to PBS affiliates, is perhaps doomed to extinction during the Reagan administration. A task force assembled by President Reagan's transition team recently concluded the Corporation should be put to sleep and out of its misery sometime soon after 1983.

This report leads those in the know to believe severe cutbacks are in store for PBS. Cable may be just what the doctor ordered.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE JITTERBUG?

While PBS works feverishly to complete plans for their cultural cable service, the folks at CBS Cable have already taped the first of their original dance productions for cablecasting.

Tentatively titled *Twyla Tharp and Dancers*, the program features the choreography of this famous American dancer, who also served as the show's director. Featured are a trio of television debuts: "Baker's Dozen," "Short Stories," and the "Bach Duet."

The cornerstone of the televised dance presentation is the aforementioned "Baker's Dozen," a number set to the music of early American jazz composer Willie "The Lion" Smith. The cast appears surrealistically in white costumes against a white background to give the appearance of a dance in space as duets, trios, quartets, sextets, solos, and the full ensemble unfold.

Music by rock group Supertramp frames "Short Stories," specifically their tune "Lover Boy," while Bruce Springsteen's "Jungleland" rounds out the number. "Bach Duet" is performed by Christine Uchido and William Whitener to the second movement of Bach's Third Orchestral Suite.

From all reports, the program is looking tharp . . . er, sharp.

BUT MOTHER TOLD US NEVER TO PLAY WITH STRANGERS

A new wrinkle in video games has appeared on the horizon and it may just make current computer cartridges obsolete.

A system called PlayCable is currently undergoing testing in several cities across the country: Santa Clara, California; Jackson, Missouri; Boise, Idaho; and Moline, Illinois. The participating homes in these cities all have Mattel Intellivision computers hooked up to their television sets which in turn are tuned to the PlayCable channel.

The user punches in a game number in his or her computer and a memory unit grabs the specified game from a central minicomputer. After the game appears on the screen, the player can compete against either the computer or another human.

PlayCable is not an inexpensive proposition: initial service costs include the \$250 to \$300 for the Intellivision unit and an approximate \$6 monthly service fee. Naturally, such costs are prohibitive for many a household, so to overcome some of the initial resistance, PlayCable has been selling the Intellivision unit on the installment plan: \$40 down and approximately \$14 a month.

The games are rotated on a monthly basis with new games added while old ones are dropped. Currently, there are 19 different games on the system, with the most requested ones being *Space Battle*, *Armor Battle*, *Baseball*, and *Football*. Interestingly enough, there have been many subscribers who have rejected basic cable services but still wanted the games.

If successful in these test markets, PlayCable will go national. Optimistic spokesmen for the company believe when that happens, more than 10,000,000 homes will be plugged into their service.

Tennis anyone?

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BETAMAX #VCHB2 Size: 8" x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	
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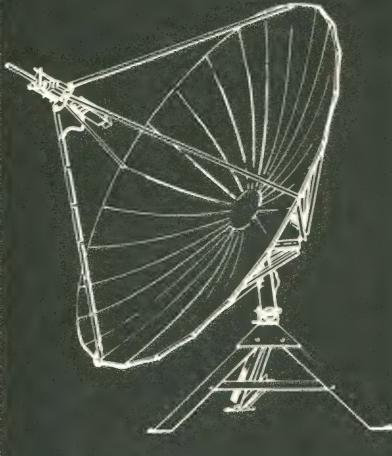
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CLAIROL GOES CABLE

Some big bucks will be filtered out of the broadcast television advertising pot and into cable with the announcement by the Bristol-Myers Company—one of television's biggest advertisers—that it will be sinking large sums of money into producing original programming for cable television.

This marks the first time that a major network advertiser will provide continuing programming for cable and is similar to undertakings of 30 years ago when advertisers produced their own television fare, rather than just sponsoring shows in so-called "magazine" format as they do now. At an estimated \$40,000,000 spread over the next 10 years, Bristol-Myers will develop cable shows around the subject of health and beauty care as well as several other subjects they believe will be interesting to women.

These shows will appear 10 hours a week, two hours a day over the USA Network, which now has over 6,500,000 subscribers on line. All those millions of dollars would most likely have gone into network advertising coffers had this plan not been hatched.

Added to the \$25,000,000 the company committed to cable advertising in 1979, all this is beginning to make the nets squirm just a little in its implications.

GETTING A CHARGE OUT OF CABLE

Home Box Office (HBO), the movie and special features cable system, will soon begin testing the use of credit card payments from its subscribers.

After an initial nationwide test, HBO is allowing new subscribers to charge their first month of viewing on their Visa or Mastercharge cards. Unless the thought of extravagant interest charges scare you away from doing this, HBO has negotiated a special low 2.9% interest rate with the two card companies.

Initially, \$40 will be the minimum amount able to be charged, but if the experiment works out to its satisfaction, HBO will allow subscribers to charge all their monthly viewing bills.

BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

Last March we reported the withdrawal of both the Cox and Warner-Amex cable companies from the bidding for the Tucson, Arizona cable franchise. The reason for the retreat was an ordinance passed by the city council which gave Tucson the right 15 years down the line to buy out the winning cabler at "book value of tangible assets." What that means is

the city would be able to pick up the franchise themselves in 1996 or thereabouts for millions of dollars below its "fair market value." Sensing a rip-off in the making, Cox and Warner said no thanks to Tucson and headed out of town.

However, an update is now in order:

After the cablers withdrew their bids—joined by several other outfits, including Storer—the city changed the wording of the buy-out clause to read, "fair market value." With that accomplished, Warner and Cox decided to reapply for the franchise after all. But Storer, perhaps a bit disgruntled by the runaround, does not plan to rejoin the others.

LET HEARST PUT YOU IN THE VIEWERS SEAT

ABC has been testing the waters around cable television for a couple of years now and has apparently decided the temperature is very much to its liking. That is why they are taking yet another plunge into the cable pond.

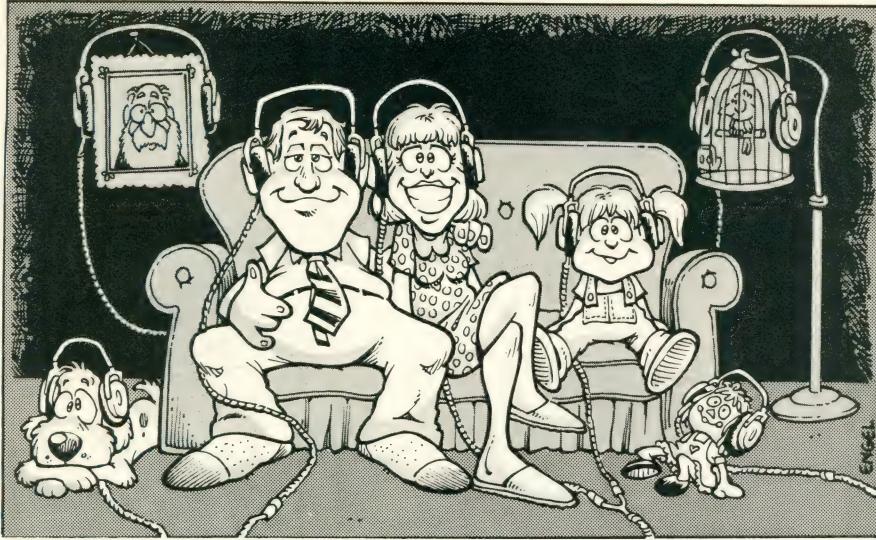
In addition to its culturally-oriented Alpha Repertory Television Service (ARTS) which was announced last December as a joint venture with the Warner-Amex Satellite Entertainment Company, ABC—along with the Hearst Corporation publishing empire—will also be involved in a new cable channel featuring specialized programming for women. This advertiser-sponsored service has been given the working title BETA and will focus its video eye on the personal interests, tastes, and behavior in vogue among women.

In making the announcement of BETA, ABC and Hearst unveiled their new partnership, Hearst/ABC Video Services. A great deal of BETA's programming will draw upon the resources brought to it by Hearst, particularly its female-oriented publications: *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *House Beautiful*, and *Town and Country*. The service is scheduled to debut later this year with four hours of programming five days weekly.

BROADCAST

SPEAKER UP!

Television has been a part of American life for better than 30 years now and in that time has undergone many changes—from tiny, dark screens to big, bright pictures in full color, from such exciting broadcast fare as *Musical Merry-Go-Round* to *Masterpiece Theater*. But one thing has not changed



in all these years—television sound reproduction is generally awful.

But now somebody is doing something about it, with no fewer than three new broadcast systems which promise to deliver stereo or bilingual sound with the picture. All three will be tested this year by their respective owners: Zenith, Telesonics, and the Electronic Industries Association of Japan. The latter has been used successfully in Japan for the past two years with impressive results.

Even now, the Matsushita Industrial Company is conducting tests of its own in Franklin Park, Illinois. It is the results of this testing—utilizing the broadcast facilities of Chicago PBS station WTTW—that the others are keeping their eyes on.

Mort David, chairman of Mura Corporation, a company specializing in innovative consumer electronics products, predicts, "Stereo television is a phenomenon that will definitely be in vogue in the U.S. in the next two to three years. What the concept does is merge high-fidelity sound with television. The switch to stereo sound should not require major design changes in a system's electronics. It is merely a matter of providing dual-channel sound and two speakers."

One problem David foresees is the inability of television sets to provide true stereo sound: "It's not that the sets will have inadequate speakers. What will limit them from providing a true stereo effect is the spatial separation of the speakers." Noting that the speakers on a 19-inch set would only be 20 to 22 inches apart, David explains: "By the time the sound reaches the listener, it is already merged."

To combat this problem, David recommends future stereo-equipped television sets include stereo headphone jacks so listeners could truly

appreciate the stereo audio with their video.

OH, WHAT TANGLED MINI-WEBS THEY WANT TO WEAVE

A few months back, the FCC began a process that may end in the formation of hundreds—if not thousands—of low-power "mini-stations" scattered across the nation. These stations would cover a broadcast area the size of a city neighborhood or small town. Though the final decision-making process is taking its usual sweet time, the Commission has decided to grant some mini-station applicants 15 stations each during the interim period.

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) had requested the FCC delay the proceedings, but, after two such delays, the Commissioners would hear no more of it. The United States Court of Appeals sided with the FCC when the NAB brought the issue to their doorstep, giving the Association still one more wound to lick. The NAB had contended the FCC's processing of applications amounted to a pre-judgement of the issue. They felt the already existing networks and local broadcasters were being frozen out of the action.

However, the NAB did get the FCC to accept applications from the nets and locals, who originally had been disqualified from preliminary participation in the expected mini-station boom.

Among the applicants are those from Sears Roebuck's Neighborhood TV Company, the Southern Baptists (who would like to set up a \$20,000,000 "mission" network of 100 low-power stations), the ABC network (with plans for pay mini-stations in New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco), and Turner Broadcasting Stations, Incorporated (for 25

stations which would broadcast full-time information and public service programming).

It may be some time before all the bureaucratic mess is cleared up as a formal FCC ruling on the issue is not expected until sometime next year. Then the courts will have a go at it.

YOU CAN'T TELL THE PURVEYORS OF SMUT AND VIOLENCE WITHOUT A SCORECARD

Add yet another pressure group to the seemingly endless list of folks who believe that some broadcast fare is adding to the decline of moral standards: the Coalition For Better Television (CFBT).

The CFBT will be conducting a television monitoring campaign, which, it hopes, will result in a successful consumer boycott of the programs it finds offensive as well as the sponsors which advertise thereon.

Backed by a coalition of fundamentalist religious organizations, the CFBT will begin its campaign by issuing what they call "scorecards" to its members. Programs will be scrutinized by scorekeepers who will keep an eye peeled for too much skin, profanity, violence, and sexual innuendo popping up on the tube. Following tabulation of the results, a boycott of the offending shows' sponsors will be attempted in the hope that television can bring us back to our long-lost *Leave It To Beaver* sensibilities.

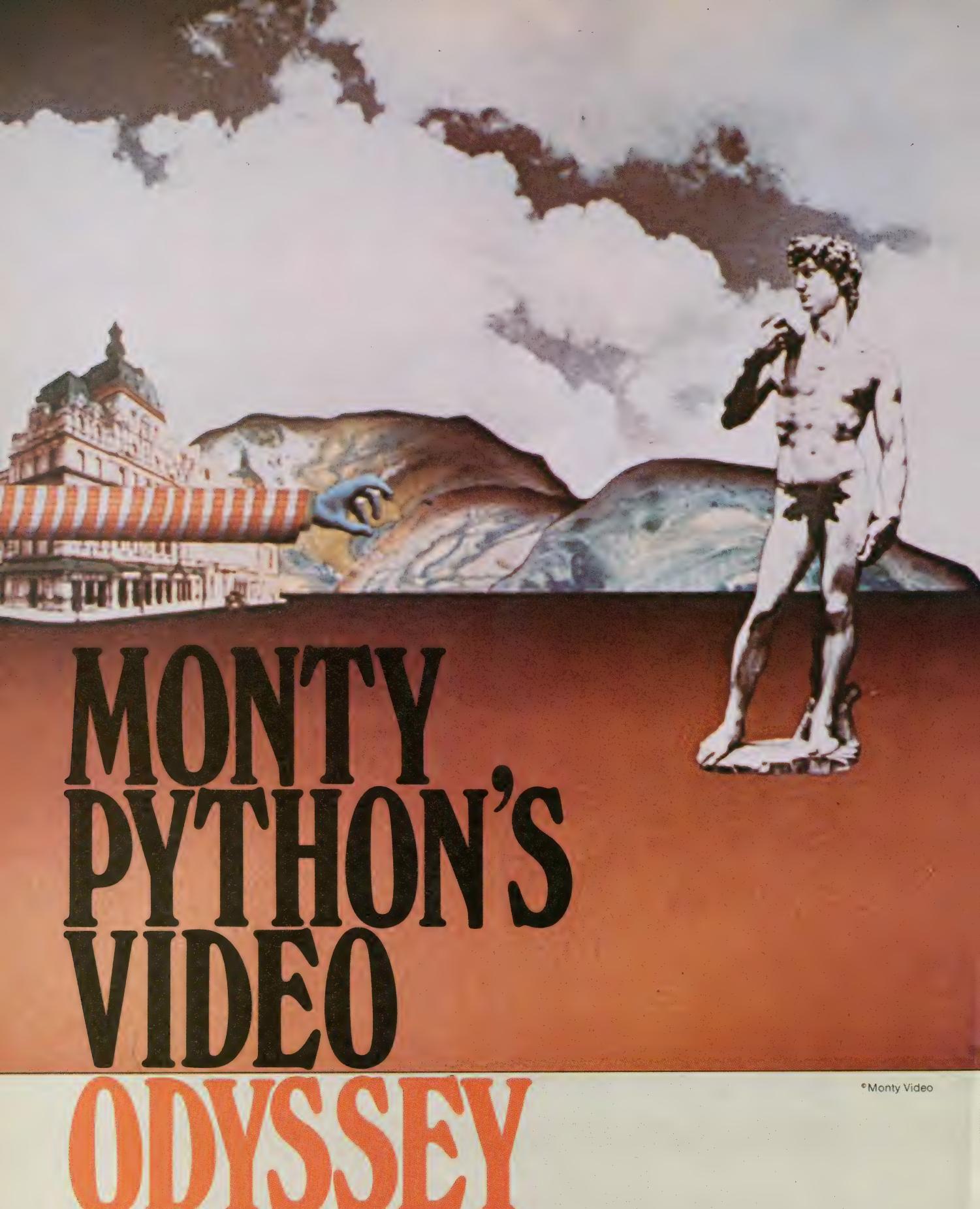
SATELLITES

YANKEES, STAY HOME!

It seems much of television's future lies in the area of home satellite receiving stations. This may make viewers happy with the potentially unlimited number of stations that can be received from the world over, but there are those who are bothered by this new technology.

The Canadian Communications Minister is one of these people. Minister Francis Fox has said he is considering the imposition of stiff regulations which would require the licensing of home dish antennas. He claims the Communications Ministry "has always considered these earth stations as radio apparatus requiring a license."

Currently the rage in Canada, these dishes have been popping up around hotels and apartment buildings so those within can enjoy television fare beamed from U.S. satellites. Fox said
(Continued on page 30)



MONTY PYTHON'S VIDEO ODYSSEY

© Monty Video

AFTER SUCCESSES IN television, records, films, and live stage shows, Monty Python is now preparing to test the home video waters with their own video company. Organized at the end of 1980, Monty Video has been formed to distribute Python products in Britain in video cassette form, beginning with *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

"We set the company up as we could make a bit more money than way, and could control the product more carefully," explains John Cleese, the tall, thoughtful silly-walker capable of hilarious outbursts of temper.

Though the six-man British comedy group did not form Monty Python until 1969, they had all known each other long before that. Michael Palin, Terry Jones, and Eric Idle, all Oxford graduates, had been working together on an innovative children's program when they were contacted by Cleese and Graham Chapman, who had been writing together since Cambridge days. BBC producer Barry Took had promised them complete freedom to do their own comedy series, so after signing up American Terry Gilliam to provide animation to link some of their more unlinkable sketches, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was born. The first series of 13 shows led to two more, plus a final series of six shot without Cleese.

Although at first they were uncertain about what sort of show they wanted to do, it became a very free-form, stream of consciousness program that broke all the rules television comedy had been so careful to establish over the last 20 years. Only the funniest portions of the sketches were used, even if it meant cutting them off without an ending. The opening titles and closing credits were not necessarily shown at the beginning and ending of the shows, but at any point in the show that seemed likely. A show could contain anywhere from one half hour sketch to over a dozen separate comedy bits, combining film, video tape, and animation. The six Pythons played nearly all the characters—male and female alike—by themselves (with assistance from Carol Cleveland).

"There would be a couple of weeks filming before the series

started, so that all the filmed elements were done well in advance," recalls Gilliam, the shaggy, lone American of the group. "Then we'd be in the studio for one day with a week's rehearsal.

"I'd do the animation beforehand, so the others would come in on the day we were in the studio, and we'd plug them into the show. Everything was shot well out of sequence, the shows in the studio didn't look anything like the shows that came out on the air. There were always some elements in the show that would have been done in front of an audience—they would have been taped early in the morning. If the audience came in the evening, we taped it then. Some of the more complicated things usually would be done in the morning of that day and would be plugged into the show proper that evening. The audience would actually see them on monitors and we'd get reactions, then it would all be assembled outwards,

"When the shows were taped there was a certain attempt to make it flow, but it was usually very difficult because there were so many elements," Gilliam continued. "There was so much time needed for us to do costume and make-up changes, you couldn't really do it like a show. There would be a folk singer and a stand-up comedian that would come out and entertain the audience in between."

In the beginning censorship was not much of a problem, in part because the BBC allowed more freedom than it does today, according to Terry Jones, the short, dusky Welshman who excels at playing the screechy old ladies that populate the shows. He admits, however, that the BBC did not pay much attention to *Python* at the start.

"We were just commissioned to make 13 shows, and at that stage nobody wanted to see any scripts, nobody wanted to see any shows before they went out," says Jones.

By Kim Howard Johnson



© Monty Video

The British madmen have conquered all known forms of popular entertainment—now they're taking on the home video market.



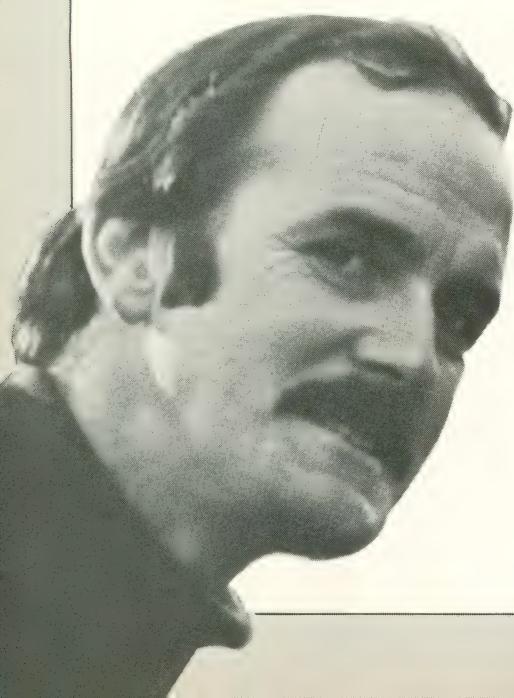
"The heads of the departments used to trust the producers, and they would not see a show until it was out on the air. As we did *Python*, things gradually got tighter. They started wanting to see the shows before they went out, and when we did the last season, the heads of the department were wanting to see the scripts before we even wrote them."

According to Barry Took, the BBC, while showing little interest in the show initially, also allowed a great deal of freedom.

"Tom Sloane, who was the head of light entertainment, his first comments to me after seeing the two pilots, was 'Does John Cleese have to say "bastard" twice?' And I said 'Well, yes, if he chooses to, that's the whole nature of this program. He's such an intelligent man he would not have said it had he not thought it artistically correct.' And he said 'Oh, that's fine,' and that was the only true criticism I received at the beginning."

Gilliam agrees that while they more or less had complete freedom, the BBC attempted to assume more control as the show became more successful.

"As the series went on they started interfering more, because it became more visible," he says. "At the beginning nobody watched the show—as far as they were concerned. As it became more visible and started getting more press, by the third series they really started to take a much greater interest in it, which usually meant they were doing the most extraordinarily stupid things, suggesting we cut this or that out. So, we had more fights as it went on, but we really did not give in much."



"In the early days when the thing was going out late at night and not costing much money, nobody in any positions of power watched the stuff. So they could care less, you've got more freedom because you do not have to argue with them. But as the thing became more successful and the budget went up a bit, and they started putting us out at more reasonable hours, they started getting involved and worrying. But, at the same time, we were becoming more powerful as well, so it balanced out."

The increasing popularity of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* led some to believe it was ready for the U.S.—or vice versa. It was finally agreed that a theatrical film was probably a safer bet than trying to adapt *Python* to American television at that time.

"Victor Lownes, who ran the European operation of Playboy, saw the series and said it would make a good film, and we could put it out in the States," Jones says. "We got a script together out of the shows, and he just wanted to use material that we'd already done, because he said he knew that worked."

All of the television sketches had to be re-shot for the wide screen, of course, and so *And Now For Something Completely Different* became a "greatest hits" collection from the first season, including such classics as Twit of the Year, Blackmail, the Dead Parrot sketch, and the Lumberjack Song.

"It was done after the first series had been done and the second series had been written. We had a lot of material there, it was all sort of thrown together as a collection of the best, we thought," Gilliam recalls. "Then Ian McNaughton (director of the television shows) directed it, and we just re-shot every single thing, some of it better, some of it not as good."

The final result was less than pleasing to the Pythons, both artistically and financially. The distributor did not really know how to promote it for its 1972 American release, and it proved to be ahead of its time. American reactions included small pockets of extreme enthusiasm and a good deal of bewilderment.

"We agreed to do it because we thought it was going out in the States and not in England," Jones says. "Then, of course, it didn't do anything in the States. It went out in England with the unfortunate title

And Now For Something Completely Different, when of course it really was 'And Now For All the Same Old Stuff'."

"It wasn't a very dedicated effort," Gilliam admits. "We were busy doing television, the second series and everything, and the same sort of care did not go into it as went into the other things. It wasn't worked out as carefully, trying to do something that was sustained over 90 minutes. I saw it on television a few months ago and I was quite pleased. I thought it was quite funny, better than I remembered it. It was really just a collection."

It probably was inevitable that America would not hold out for long against *Monty Python*. It was primarily through the efforts of two people that it got a chance on PBS. Nancy Lewis, who was working for a record company in New York at the time, was "constantly agitating" Time-Life on her own, while Dallas PBS head Ron DeVillier was also quite keen on it.

"He was buying some shows and had just been told there was this *Flying Circus* thing, and he said 'What's it like?'" relates Jones. "And the BBC said 'Oh, you won't really be interested.' But he saw one show, and then he ordered up all the shows, and spent two days watching them all. He was so knocked out he had to go 'round and persuade 11 other stations to take the shows. Then, when he put them out on PBS in Dallas, they just got this incredible response."

"I really think Nancy and Ron deserve the greatest credit for getting it on," Gilliam agrees. "It was nothing to do with us, we did not do a thing to help. They were trying to get it out of Time-Life, and trying to get Time-Life to show an interest in it, 'cause they didn't think it would go either. Time-Life handled all of the BBC material in the States, at the time, and they were next to useless."

"The first series went out, and it went over very well, and they tried to get the rest of the stuff. It kept growing, it must have been over a year and a half before it got everywhere, maybe longer. Los Angeles was one of the last places to take it. *Holy Grail* opened there and it still wasn't on television. Eric and I went out to L.A. and were on chat shows there, and nobody talking to us knew what the show was like. I don't know why, but

the PBS station in L.A. just was not interested in it.

"It was quite amazing how it spread in the Midwest. I remember on chat shows in New York they were saying, 'Well, we on the coasts understand it, us being sophisticated cosmopolitan sorts, but what about the people in Nebraska?' In fact, in the Midwest it had wonderful sorts of reactions. There was one point where it was taken off for a while in Iowa or Nebraska or South Dakota, and there were these huge demonstrations. One of the reasons we made *And Now For Something Completely Different* was that we'd been told by everybody that the stuff would never go down in America on television, it would never be able to be shown . . ."

By the time *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* was released in 1975, the Pythons had decided they had done about all they could want to do in the television shows, and became anxious to move on to other things on their own. John Cleese had already left the group before filming of the last six shows, and despite rumors that the breakup of the group was imminent, it only signalled the end of the television series.

"I just became tired of it a little before the others, that's all," says Cleese. "I never left the group, just the television show. And although one or two of the others were particularly upset at first, I think they all really came around to agree with me before long. I was always interested in participating in films or other Python projects apart from the series."

Cleese was also the first to develop his own show, *Fawlty Towers*, which is considered by many to be quite simply the best situation comedy ever done, featured Cleese as the extremely irritable manager of a small British hotel. Basil Fawlty is assisted by domineering wife Sybil, competent maid Polly (played by Cleese's writing partner and ex-wife Connie Booth), and hopeless Spanish waiter Manuel, whose lack of competence with the English language is matched only by Fawlty's impatience.

"The BBC asked me if there was anything at all I wanted to do, knowing I had parted from the *Python* television. I am sure all of us, though, knew we could talk to the appropriate BBC folk if we came up with good ideas," Cleese says.

Only two seasons of six shows each were made, despite its popularity—in England, Cleese is even better known as Basil Fawlty than as

a Python. He believes doing any more episodes would have lessened the quality.

"The last series was the hardest thing I've ever done, both in terms of demands of whatever talent I've got and in terms of hours spent. It was a killer.

"One advantage with *Fawlty Towers* was that there was no area where censorship really arose. They only worried about two points in the 12 shows, and I had already cut the controversial reference before they raised the matter. I had far more control in *Fawlty Towers* than I ever had in *Python*, sharing it with the director and Connie, and to a lesser extent Sybil and Manuel."

After doing the six shows without Cleese, the rest of the Pythons decided to move out on their own, even though all six of them were writing what would become *Life of*



"In the early days when MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS was going on late at night and not costing much money, nobody in any position of power at the BBC watched the stuff."

Brian, and had reunited for a four week live show at New York's City Center.

Graham Chapman wrote and performed in his own television special in England, and also produced and starred in his own film, *The Odd Job*. Yet to see release in the U.S., it is the story of a cowardly suicide who hires an odd job man to do him in. All the while, he continued writing the recently published *A Liar's Autobiography* while fighting alcoholism.

Terry Gilliam set his sights on film, and continued writing a script which became the film *Jabberwocky*, released in 1977. Very loosely based on the Lewis Carroll poem, the film starred Michael Palin and featured brief appearances by Terry Jones and himself.

Palin and Jones followed up *Python* with their own BBC series, *Ripping Yarns*. Each of the nine shows were individual stories inspired by the British schoolboy stories of 60 and 70 years ago.

"Terry Hughes, who was a producer at the BBC at the time, had sort of approached me about working with him, and it was about the time we were finishing *Grail* that Terry Jones and I saw that *Python* was sort of winding down for awhile," Palin says in one of his few serious moments. "I particularly did not want to do a variety show. You know, 'Michael Palin walks down the stairs and presents the Three Degrees . . .' So when we did 'Tomkinson's School Days' it was sort of a pilot . . ."

"Michael and I were talking," re-

calls Jones, "And Mike was saying he really didn't want to do a revue type show, but they basically wanted to do something starring Mike. Mike and I decided to do it together, we'd write it, and my brother suggested the idea of doing sort of 'Boys Own Papers' stories. I gave the idea to Mike, and we started 'Tomkinson's School Days'."

Eric Idle also decided to do his own series, and with Neil Innes began *Rutland Weekend Television*, supposedly the smallest television company in Britain. Innes—a former member of the Bonzo Dog Band who appeared in *Grail* and also did some other Python music—worked well with Idle and created much of the music for the show. The two later turned a brief film of the Rutles into the definitive Beatles parody, resulting in a successful album and an unsuccessful NBC movie, *All You Need Is Cash* (featuring, among other rock and comedy guest stars, Python friend George Harrison).

Idle and Palin both kept in front of American audiences with several appearances each on *Saturday Night Live*. Though both shows broke new ground with anarchic, innovative humor, Palin notes the attempt to do Python humor on the show was not always as successful on the show as it might have been.

"I particularly enjoyed the 'Sherlock Holmes Cocaine' sketch, and the 'Eric Cowperwaith' sketches, particularly where Belushi played the raging sea captain. Both Eric and I helped with the writing, though," he recalls. "In particular, I had trouble with—and would have liked to have done more with—the opening monologues. I did enjoy the one where I stuffed the cats down my pants.

"I suppose what it all comes down to is that you can't really do Python material unless you have Python writers and Python actors . . ."

The Pythons have, for the most part, had trouble dealing with American commercial television. One example of this occurred when ABC television bought the rights to the last six *Python* shows in 1975 as part of their *Wide World of Entertainment*. Trying to fit 90 minutes of *Python* into 68-minutes of programming time gave the ABC butchers a field day, cutting out great chunks of sketches and censoring lines that were absolutely vital to the humor. The end result was a program which was not only less than funny, portions of it were incomprehensible.

When the Pythons found out about



The Pythons in reclining somnambulance. (Left to Right)
Michael Palin, Eric Idle, Graham Chapman, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones and John Cleese.

it afterward, they were outraged. They went to court and attempted to have an injunction placed against ABC to prevent them from showing the butchered remains of the second three programs. Though they were ultimately unable to stop that show from airing, they continued their David vs. Goliath struggle in court with several appeals. Despite losing the preliminary battle, they ultimately managed to establish new rights for writer/creators, and Gilliam, et al vs. ABC became a precedent-setting case.

"When we first took ABC to court, Time-Life was in there, as much as on the ABC side," recalls Gilliam, who testified along with Palin at the proceedings. "It was really us against all of them."

"We had agreed to show one of our shows, and ABC's edited version of the same show. The amazing thing was—and nobody objected to it at all—that we got to present our complete version of the show first, which made ABC's version look that much worse."

"Basically, what happened was that the judge was a fan. One of the shows was played back on a television in the courtroom, and everybody had to crowd around the jury

box. There was a courtroom scene in that show, which the judge loved . . . The proceedings were like something out of Python sketches."

By far the Pythons' best-known battle with censorship came with 1979's release of *Life of Brian*. The group remained firm in the face of blasphemy laws in England and fanatical religious protests in America. Their story of a young man living in Judea in 33 A.D. who is mistaken for a messiah not only became a critical and box-office success, the video tape, released by Warner Home Video, became a top-seller. This became a source of irritation to some of the Pythons, as they had no real control over the *Brian* video cassette. The rights had been given up during original negotiations with Warners.

"We were pissed off that Warner Brothers was given the video rights to it," Gilliam says with a hint of disgust. "That was part of the deal on the distribution, they got the rights to it. I think it was a dumb thing, but that's what they wanted, it was just one more chip in the bargaining."

In a related move, the Pythons decided they should try to retain more control over their projects, and largely through Idle's urgings, they set up their own video company.

"It came about especially from Eric," says Jones. "It was just really realizing that there was going to be a market and that we ought to have control over our own video label. It

"We were pissed off that Warner Brothers was given the video rights to FLYING CIRCUS . . ." and that, indirectly, lead to the formation of Monty Video.

will basically be putting out all the Python stuff."

Though Monty Video was set up in order to control Python products, another immediate concern was getting *Grail* out to the British market.

"It was all set up primarily to get *Grail* out in video cassette form here," Palin says. "We wanted to protect our own interests and have more control over our own releases. There is really not a big market for video tape here yet, but I suspect it'll get pretty big this year."

At the present, Monty Video is set up exclusively for England, and the scope of future releases is unknown.

"There are a couple of deals with different organizations being negotiated now," Gilliam says. "But nothing's really been settled on in the States as to how the stuff's going to be handled. This was just set up for England, really, 'cause it's easier at this stage to do something like that here. I think it will eventually be expanded to the States if it works. We're just trying to stay in a position of controlling everything ourselves, rather than giving it to other people."

Grail was released in England just in time for Christmas last year, the first release of the new company. Monty Video's concern right now is only the release of previous Python products. The group seems to be in agreement that any new material solely for the video cassette/video-disc market would be impractical at the present.

"I think to actually do a production for it wouldn't be economical at the moment," says Jones. "It would cost too much to make the thing when we're not absolutely certain of the return on it."

"Yeah, nobody's really thinking along those lines," agrees Gilliam. "I mean, there's just such a backlog of stuff, we're trying to decide how to deal with that."

The second release planned for Monty Video is a film of the group's four-night stand at the Hollywood Bowl last September. Directed by Terry Hughes, the film was originally intended only for HBO—the cost of doing the live show was so prohibitive that, according to Cleese, "selling it to cable television was the only way we could hope to make a bit of money out of it."

"I think it will include individual projects," says Cleese. "The BBC owns the rights to *Towers* at present, but I may be able to get them eventually."

"Possibly, possibly not," says Jones. "It depends on copyright things. Basically, it'll be putting out all the Python shows and films."

The possibility of releasing the 45-half hour shows is of special interest to Python fans now as, for the first time since the show began here, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* cannot be seen—anywhere—on American television. The rights for the shows with PBS expired at the end of 1980, and no one—least of all the Pythons themselves—knows right now when or by whom they will be broadcast again.

"We actually own all the stuff now," Gilliam explains. "This is part of the outcome of the ABC case, the settlement in the end was that all the rights reverted to us at the end of 1980. So those tapes are ours. That's why we're in a position where we can actually do something with them now besides PBS, if we want."

What will be done with them remains the question at the moment. Negotiations are continuing with Tele Pictures on the possible sale of the shows to commercial television here. The Pythons had previously agreed to permit one commercial break in each show, but Tele Pictures wants three, so the negotiations continue.

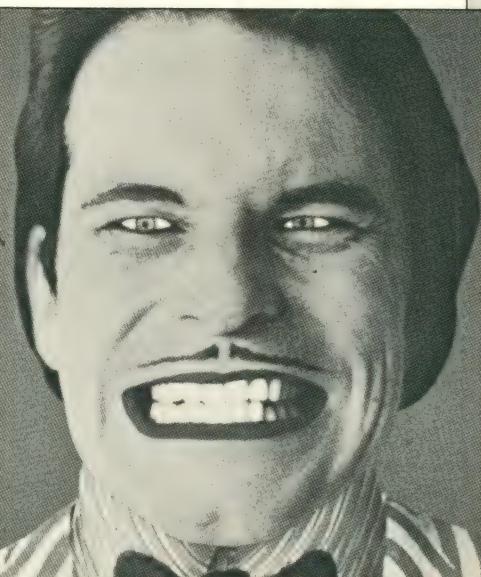
"There's been a lot of pressure over the years," to put the shows on commercial television, says Gilliam. "Everybody says that so few people watch public broadcasting we're missing out on a large market, that there's a lot of people out there that would like to see *Python*. This is the argument, actually about money. It's called 'You'll Make a Lot More Money If More People Watch It.' We've all got our own opinions about the whole thing."

No matter how the situation is resolved, the Pythons will do all necessary editing themselves. And the shows will either be going out on cable television or on video cassette.

Even as the business talks continue, the Pythons continue to create. Gilliam's new film, *The Time Bandits*, which features Palin and Cleese, along with Sean Connery, Shelley Duvall, and David Warner, will open this summer in the U.S. Chapman's *Yellowbeard*, a send-up of *Treasure Island*, is filming at present, and Idle is wrapping up a deal to do his own *Pirates of Penzance*. Through it all, plans for the next Python film are progressing slowly but surely, and surprisingly enough, not all of the Pythons have ruled out the possibility of a return some day to television for a few more show.

"You know it's funny," says Gilliam. "I was talking with Terry the other night, and there's a lot of material that's left over from the film we're working on. Terry and Mike were sort of looking at it and thinking. 'Well, these would make six television shows very nicely . . .'"

"It came up right at the end of the writing session and we haven't discussed it since," says Jones thoughtfully. "But, it's quite an interesting idea . . ."



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Newsline

(Continued from page 23)

his concern is "the unrestricted importation of 25 or more channels of American satellite television into major Canadian markets." He fears this practice threatens to "seriously undermine the Canadian broadcasting system."

In making these statements Fox ignored—or at least dismissed—the findings of a ministry report which found earth stations to be legal as long as they were employed in a not-for-profit basis. All this means that the Canadian broadcast system will be undergoing a massive reexamination in the face of these new technologies.

In the meantime, the Canadians will continue their fight to keep Canada Canadian. Perhaps they will even call for passports for broadcast signals coming across their borders.

RATINGS

NUMBER THREE AND FALLING

These are not the best of times for network television.

In an effort to garner even more ratings points in the perpetual three-way race, ABC has decided to start featuring more made-for-television movies and hour-long series (a la *Dallas*) in the upcoming season.

Still reeling from dismal ratings caused by last fall's actor strike—when they were forced to pit reruns against the likes of NBC's *Shogun*—ABC is considering going against the competing network programs which have thusfar been beating the pants off their Friday and Sunday night movies. *Dallas* and *Dukes of Hazzard* generally steal their timeslots against ABC's movie fare and the net has decided to fight fire with fire.

ABC Entertainment president Tony Thomopoulos blames some of his network's lower ratings on cable television. Thomopoulos contends that when networks would buy theatrical releases in the past the viewer "... knew network television was the only place the viewer could see top features. Even though cable does not have total penetration, it has still created the perception that theatricals are available elsewhere. As a result, these movies have lost their edge, their uniqueness."

ABC, he says, will therefore be pushing more big event and world premiere types of programming. There is also talk of expanding some of their already existing big guns, like the

ever-popular *Love Boat* and *Fantasy Island* to 90-minute slots to keep more viewers turned to ABC longer. They also have high hopes for some of the new shows including *Greatest American Hero* from producer Stephen Cannell, starring Robert Culp, *True Life Stories* (a clone of *Real People*), *Mr. and Mrs. Dracula*, and *Nashville Palace*, ABC's possible competition against *Dallas*.

PICK A NUMBER BETWEEN ONE AND 240,000,000

One problem associated with cable television—at least from the operators' and advertisers' points of view—is how best to measure, accurately, the audience of a particular narrowcast.

The A.C. Nielsen Company, backed by the National Cable TV Association, is going to attempt to find out either this May or November. They will be testing eight different methods of surveying cable viewership in the hopes that at least one will prove economically and technically feasible. Four of the tests will gain information on household viewing, while the rest will reflect personal cable usage. Both diary and telephone survey methods will be evaluated.

The cable industry naturally considers this research to be extremely important. Without a standard, consistent methodology, cable operators have a difficult time estimating viewership and establishing the all-important advertising rates. Advertisers want to know who and how many are watching before they buy time on cable stations.

TELETEXT

TO TELETEXT OR NOT TO TELETEXT... WHAT'S THE QUESTION?

Field Communications has won authorization from the Federal Communications Commission to conduct a year long test of an experimental teletext service over its WFLD-TV (Channel 32) station in Chicago.

The test is to determine the economic feasibility and technical viability of a British-created teletext system. Field Communications will offer written news, access to specialized information, and limited advertising to its initial audience of approximately 100 subscribers. Special receivers and decoders, of course, will be supplied to the customers who will pay between \$50 and \$120 a month for the privilege of being part of the experiment.

Even though there are some broad-

casters who have been pushing heavily for some sort of unified teletext system for this country, the Field Communications test comes at a time when still others are questioning whether teletext is really necessary in light of the capabilities and proliferation of home computers. It is hoped the Chicago experiment—along with similar tests in Los Angeles and Washington being conducted by CBS—will give some sort of answer.

HOME COMPUTERS

GETTING BACK TO BASIC

One of the more interesting—and exciting—aspects of the laser optical videodisc is its "interactive" quality—the ability of the user to work along with the disc for instructional and educational purposes. The military, as well as some school systems are already heavy into the interactive uses of discs, but little has been done in the way of consumer-oriented materials.

The folks at Whitney Educational Services have changed all that. One of the more innovative ideas in recent months comes from the Northport, New York firm with their WI-2001 interactive videodisc training system. The WI-2001 disc allows an Apple 48K Computer to interface with a Pioneer disc player, creating a low cost television training system.

The WI-2001 consists of an electronic circuit card that plugs into the Apple unit and a program diskette and allows for easy programming of a previously difficult—for most people—system. Whitney also offers an "authoring program" which, through use of both the computer and disc machine alternating on the television set, teaches users in an easy-to-understand, step-by-step method how to program their computers.

What is truly unique about the system is that no knowledge of computer language is necessary: the program converts the user's instructions from plain English into the BASIC computer language while allowing an interesting mix of computer-generated text, graphics, sounds, and videodisc images to appear on the screen.

Considering the capabilities of the Whitney programs, its suggested retail price of \$325 is not at all bad. And the \$195 authoring program is cheap at twice the price for anybody who has ever tried to learn computerese but found such things as binary numbers totally incomprehensible.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES

Shoppers! Throw off your chains—you have nothing to loose but your

shopping lists.

This is thanks to an on-going test of home data access and home shopping via the Viewtron information system experiment being conducted in Coral Cables, Florida. Approximately 160 homes have had the system installed over the past six months with an eye towards "non-store shopping"—better known as ordering goods in the comfort and convenience of your living room over your television set.

Though such practices are rare these days, the folks at Viewdata Corporation, a subsidiary of Knight-Ridder Newspapers, foresee the day when

this kind of shopping will account for a third of all U.S. general merchandising sales. That translates into \$250 billion in retail sales, perhaps as early as 1990.

Those homes now linked to the system have access to Viewtron 18 hours a day. They can order anything from the week's groceries to clothing—and comparison shop before keying their final decision into their televisions. On top of that, Viewtron also allows its test group to make appointments with a wide variety of service-oriented businesses around town.

Consider the possibilities!



Keep your tape library in mint condition.

Protect your video treasures from dust and damage in book-style storage boxes that are handsome in appearance and constructed of sturdy polypropylene. Available in VHS and Beta formats in decorator colors with reversible labels for program information.

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Illustrations by Richard Bernal



FOR SOME PEOPLE, ALL the world is a stage. For others, it is a canvas. For a great many more, it is a bowl—a Super Bowl, a Rose Bowl, anything but a cereal bowl. It is for these people who count their blessings as box scores that this article has been written.

Sports on television is as American as the White House, and much more colorful. We have been experiencing the proverbial "thrill of victory" and its flipside since the beginnings of broadcasting. Thus, the library of video programming is large and extends over a wide variety of sports. Want to see last year's World Series highlights? Go ahead—they are available. Craving

PLAY BY PLAY

By Marilyn Ferdinand

A GUIDE TO HOME VIDEO SPORTS

some vintage Babe Ruth? Video's got that, too. Are your tastes more esoteric? Try some bobsledding programs, or hatha yoga instructions, or figure skating extravaganzas.

We have assembled a semi-random sampling of the kinds of home video programming now available in standard Beta and VHS formats. The type of sport, the air time, and the distributors of each program have been listed, along with a pointed description of the contents.

Individual events in such offerings as the Super Bowl games, the British Open golf tournaments, and the various World Series have not been included—persistent fans will undoubtedly find their way to the specific game of their dreams.

On to the main event. And, my humblest apologies to sports widows and widowers everywhere.

Abyss

Mountaineering, 17 min., Phoenix Films

Trouble in high places for climber Sorgato. His dramatic 140-foot fall on the West Peak of Lavaredo in the Dolomites should be the high (make that the low) point of the documentary.

Ali vs. Spinks Fight I

Ali vs. Spinks Fight II

Boxing, Magnetic Video

These two, individually available cassettes contain the complete record of Leon Spinks' boxing career. Muhammad Ali makes cameo appearances.

All-Star Games, 1970-1979

Baseball, 30 min., Major League Baseball Productions

Ten individually available programs that could be retitled "National League Romps." American League fans have only 1971 to cheer about, but they have to sit through a floor show—a tribute to homerun sluggers.

The American Ski Scene with Billy Kidd

Skiing, 30 min., TV Sports Scene

Thirteen programs that get to the heart of the American ski life. Glamorous resorts, lots of schussing, especially among such featured celebrities as Claudine Longet, Clint Eastwood, and Spider Sabich.

The Art of Ballooning

Aviation, 29 min., Michigan Media

A good introduction to pollution-free air travel. Historic, mechanical, and competitive aspects of ballooning are featured.

Babe Ruth

Baseball, 25 min., Sterling Educational Films

The "Sultan of Swat" reigns again in this video biography. This is a black-and-white presentation, because they did not play baseball in color in those days.

Baseball Bats and Samurai Swords

Baseball, 60 min., VidAmerica

Nothing dangerous about this tape despite the gangland-style title. United States players (Dave Kingman, Bill Madlock, Dave Parker, Ted Simmons) meet the Japanese All-Stars in a fine demonstration of an unlikely American export.

Baseball: Fun and Games

Baseball, 60 min., VidAmerica

Who changed the scoreboard numbers in the fifth game of the 1948 Series? This offering might not have that answer, but it has plenty of other tidbits to satisfy any trivialogist.



Baseball Miracles

Baseball, 60 min., Sports World Cinema

The 1969 season made somebodies of the New York Mets, one of the National League's major midgets up to that point. The team immediately went into shock and stayed there until 1973, the comeback year. For New Yorkers and other underdog lovers.

Between Chaos and Beauty

Skiing, 16 min., Sports World Cinema: American Cable Network

The graceful, unique sport of ballet skiing is fascinating to watch. Freestyle champions John Clendennin and Wayne Wong really know how to cut a rug.

Billie Jean King: Tennis Everyone

Tennis, 119 min., Magnetic Video

You can take it from a pro as Billie Jean King offers instructions on the serve, forehand and backhand, the volley, special shots, doubles matches, and practice drills.

Bob Rosburg's Golf Tips

Golf, 58 min., Video Sports Productions

This program is designed to take four to five strokes off a golfer's game by teaching the fundamentals of playing the green. If the average golfer watches it five times, will he lose 25 strokes?

Boxing's Greatest Champions

Boxing, 59 min., VidAmerica

The Boxing Writers Association pits their ringers—Barney Ross, Rocky Marciano, Archie Moore, Sugar Ray Robinson, and Joe Louis—against your unpunched brains in a boxing quiz. My money's on the video contender.

Catch the Joy (disc)

Football, 30 min., MCA DiscoVision (optical)

Profile of a pass receiver—how he does it under the pressure of severe bodily injury.

Chase the Wind

Auto racing, 25 min., Sports World Cinema; American Cable Network

There apparently have been many people throughout history who really wanted to possess the world land speed record. That different kind of speed freak is featured here.

The Cold Rush

Skiing, 30 min., Golden Tape

A touch of sadism in ski appreciation. The worst in skiing (and that can only mean wipe-outs) is captured for your viewing pleasure.

Courage to Succeed

Swimming, 28 min., Texture Films

Award-winning film featuring Diana Nyad discussing fitness, endurance, and courage in sports. Her frightening marathon swims take these principles to the nth degree.

Exercise at Home

Home fitness, 24 min., World Wide Tape Distributors

Useful fitness reminder for the leisure-minded video consumer. Health and contentment are promised for as little as 14 minutes of exercising per day, less Sundays and holidays.

Experimental

Aviation, 13 min., Phoenix Films

A celebration of the beauty and glory of flight that has been highly acclaimed, including winning a Silver Hugo at the Chicago International Film Festival.

Extraordinary Powers

Sports psychology, 13 min., Michael Wiese Film Productions (VHS only)

The difference between great sports feats and mediocre showings can be only a synapse wide. Running speedsters are the guinea pigs in this evaluation of psychic motivation.

50 Years of Baseball Memories

Baseball, 30 min., Major League Baseball Productions

Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Lou Gehrig, Tris Speaker, Mel Ott, Warren Spahn, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle. Need we say more?

Floating Free

Frisbee, 11 min., Pyramid Films

The plastic discus certainly has come a long way. Avid fans have turned frisbee-throwing into an art that has been captured on this film of the 1977 World Frisbee Championships.

The Football Coach

Football, 51 min., Time-Life Video

Ohio was declared a Disaster Area everytime Woody Hayes' Buckeyes lost a game. This portrait captures every bulging vein.

Four Great Joe Louis Fights

Boxing, 60 min., Discount Video Tapes

Tony Galento, 1939; Arturo Godoy, 1940; Max Baer, 1941; "Jersey" Joe Wolcott, 1948. Straight sets for Louis.

Four Great Muhammad Ali Fights

Boxing, 56 min., Discount Video Tapes

Archie Moore, 1962; Henry Cooper, 1963; World Heavyweight Champion Sonny Liston, 1964; Floyd Patterson, 1965. The young prodigious Ali.

Greatest Legends of Basketball

Basketball, 60 min., Magnetic Video

Some of the greatest bouncers of our day: Jerry West, Oscar Robertson, Elgin Baylor. And guess who's giving the orders—John Wooden

Heat Induced Illness in Athletes

Sports medicine, 38 min., Emory Medical TV Network

As trendy as running may be, there are some pitfalls. The physical causes and consequences of heat stroke are the topics of discussion here.

VIDEO SPORTS DISTRIBUTORS

American Cable Network
701 S. Airport Road
Traverse City, MI 49684

Champions on Film
745 State Circle
P.O. Box 1941
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment
711 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Discount Video Tapes
P.O. Box 7122
Burbank, CA 91510

Emory Medical Television Network
69 Butler Street S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30303

Fotomat Corporation
64 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

Golden Tape Inc.
336 Foothill Road
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Magnetic Video Corporation
23434 Industrial Park Court
Farmington Hills, MI 48024

Major League Baseball Productions
1212 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

MCA DiscoVision Inc.
100 Universal City Plaza
Universal City, CA 91608

Media Guild
118 S. Acacia
Box 881
Solana Beach, CA 92075

Michael Wiese Film Productions
Box 245
Sausalito, CA 94966

Michigan Media
University of Michigan
400 Fourth Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

New York Racing Association
P.O. Box 90
Jamaica, NY 11417

NFL Films
330 Fellowship Road
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

Phoenix Films Inc.
470 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

Pictura Films
111 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10011

Pyramid Films
Box 1048
Santa Monica, CA 90406

Sports World Cinema
P.O. Box 17022
Salt Lake City, UT 84117

Sterling Educational Films Inc.
241 E. 34th Street
New York, NY 10016

Texture Films Inc.
1600 Broadway
New York, NY 10019

Time-Life Video
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

TV Sports Scene Inc. (TVSS Inc.)
8200 Normandale Boulevard
323 Normandale Office Park
Minneapolis, MN 55437

VidAmerica Inc.
231 E. 55th Street
New York, NY 10022

Video Sports Productions
900 E. Karen
Suite B 208
Las Vegas, NV 89109

World Wide Tape Distributors
223 Keats Drive
Sicklerville, NJ 08081

I Move

Miscellaneous sports, 24 min., Michael Wiese Film Productions (VHS only)

For people who enjoy mixing butter pecan ice cream and spaghetti sauce, this film combines the latest in aikido, ballet, long distance running, basketball, swimming, massage, and biofeedback.

If You Can Walk/Listen to the Mountains (disc)

Skiing, 60 min., MCA DiscoVision (optical)

Cross-country skiing demonstrated on the ridges of the French Alps. Beginners are advised to stick to prairie crossing in the off-season.

The Impact of Roger Bannister

Running, 26 min., Pictura Films

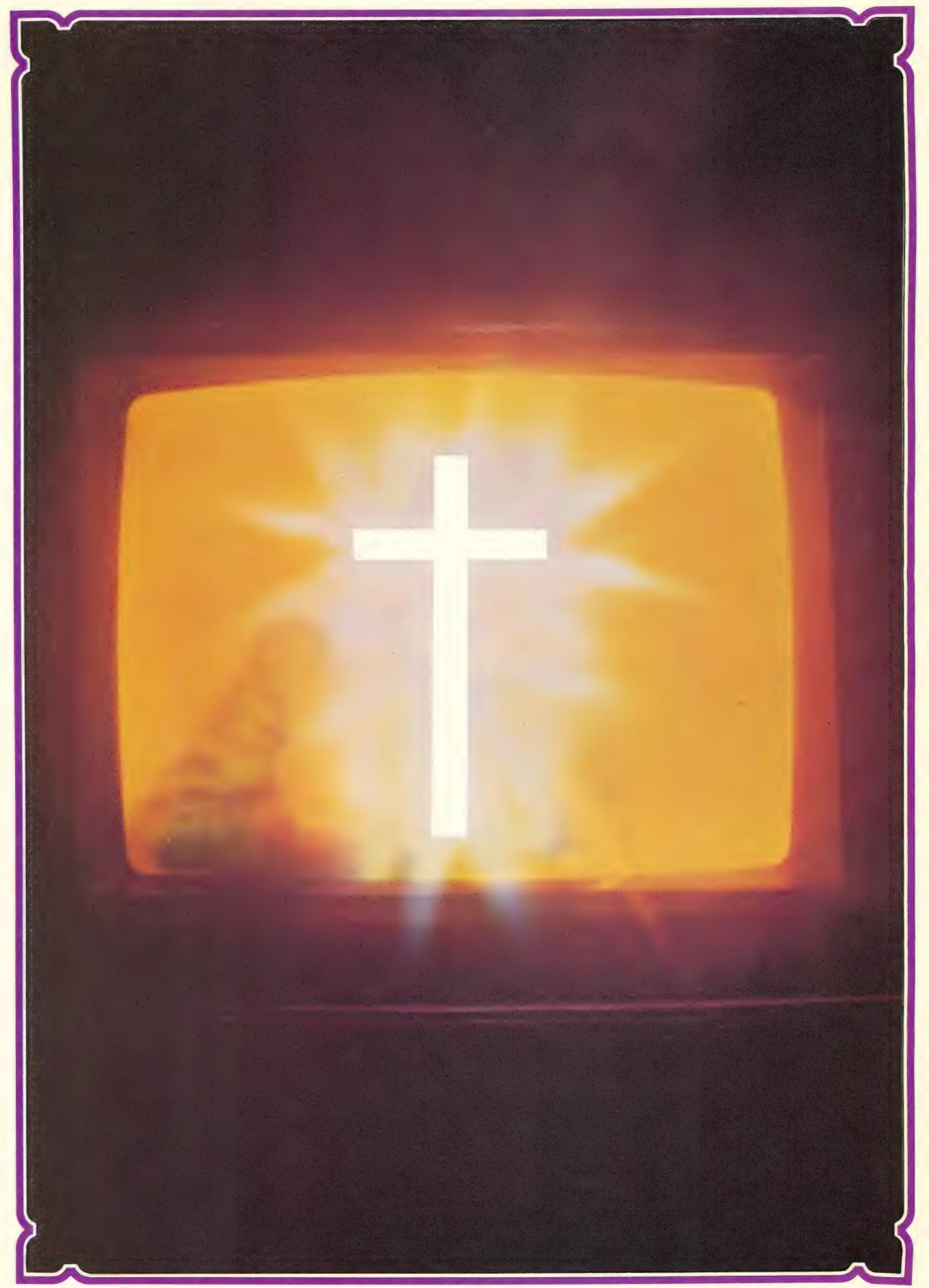
Running a mile in less than four minutes is a significant event for people without creditors. The first among them to do it was Roger Bannister, and he is profiled here.

Jogging/Aerobics

Home fitness, 24 min., World Wide Tape Distributors

Healthy, happy jogging requires a great attention to detail. The proper attire and designs are discussed along with running techniques. Aerobics, that new healthy dance craze, is also promoted.

(Continued on page 47)



"It is either Christ or chaos."
—Pat Robertson, *The 700 Club*

"America has one last chance."
—Jim Bakker, *The PTL Club*

tHUS THE CULTURAL BATTLE line has been drawn by two of television's most popular preachers. America is declining. It must drop its sinful ways. If you are not with us, you are on the side of decay.

It has been called the "New Religious Right" and the "Electronic Church." It is a relatively new phe-

nomenon, but in its few years of existence it has helped to elect a President, toppled several liberal politicians, registered several million voters who go along with its party line, and has affected the course of a great deal of legislation. Had the New Left been as effective, George McGovern would have been President and marijuana would be legal.

While the Electronic Church has accomplished many of its aims through the ballot box and traditional lobbying efforts, what truly separates this entity from the scope of past religious activity is the awesome power of television, a power it has harnessed. A power which it hopes to use in effecting a bloodless, religious *coup d'etat*.

In retrospect, the emergence of the Electronic Church is not surprising, for it has grown in tandem with the medium which gave it birth. Both have burgeoned in recent years and affected the society surrounding them in ways few social prophets of years past envisioned.

A purported 50,000,000 Americans (according to the National Association of Religious Broadcasters) watch at least one religious program on television each week. We are not referring to the *Meditations* or *Five Minutes to Live By* nightly station sign-offs, but lavish affairs like the *700 Club* and *The Old Time Gospel Hour*.

While many of the programs and the religious stations which run them are modest operations, the movers and shakers of the Electronic Church are anything but paupers. A rich man entering the Kingdom of Heaven being like a camel passing through the eye of a needle aside, about \$500,000,000 a year is spent by religious broadcasters to preach their messages. So much of this money is now involved in the born-again boom that those at the top of the pile—Jerry Falwell, Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson, James Robinson, Rex Humbard, Robert Schuller, Jimmy Swaggerty, and others—have become known to their critics as "The Jesus Jet Set."

It is not the purview of this article, however, to delve into how the money is split or to discuss at great

A Thunder from the Tube

The Electronic Church wants to get its licks in.

OPINION by T.B. Martin

Many of the religious programs and stations are modest operations, though the movers and shakers of the Electronic Church are anything but paupers—about \$500,000,000 a year is spent to preach their messages.

length the theological differences between the various television evangelists.

That some are zealots and others charlatans is a given. Leroy Jenkins, a video faith healer, languishes in a prison cell for accounting peculiarities, though he retains a substantial following who consider him a martyr and continue to shower him with dollars. There are those who solicit contributions in return for miraculous "prayer cloths," and those who claim to heal the physically afflicted by enjoining them to place their palms on their television screens and feel the power of the Holy Spirit coming through them via the cathode.

And there are those, probably the majority, who are quite sincere and who also adhere to the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Religious Broadcasters—which, among other things, requires a relatively strict financial accountability.

The growth of the membership of the NRB mirrors the increasing pervasiveness of the evangelical presence on the airwaves: from 100 in 1970 to nearly 1000 ten years later.

The Electronic Church, rather than being an extension of the local church, is a reaction to various social trends which galvanized during the middle 1960s and which continue to produce serious strains on the body politic.

"Traditional family values" (a buzz phrase of television revivalists) are seen to be burning on a pyre fueled by pornography, alcoholism, socialism, drug abuse, homosexuality, divorce, illegitimacy, inflation, and rampant violent crime. That Old Time Religion—armed with satellites, computers, cable, and chromakey—is the water to extinguish the sinful decadent fire. From the ashes will spring a revitalized nuclear family, and from the restoration of the family will come a strong and godly society. But beneath this philosophy is the constant dark message which beams from almost all corners of the Electronic Church: these are the final days as prophesized in the Bible. The world may soon end and there is much to be done.

It is a simple, captivating vision. It is, in fact, its simplicity which has been attacked by theologians from the more moderate mainstream churches.

But the greatest amount of criticism of the Electronic Church in general, and its shock troops—the Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority—in particular, has been its linkage of

religious and political activity.

Though we have in our country a modicum of separation of church and state, the separation of religion and politics in American history has been a rare occurrence. This is evident from at least the time of the "Great Awakening" of fundamentalist Christianity in the middle 19th Century and its influence on the abolitionists, through Cardinal Spellman blessing weaponry bound for Southeast Asia in the 1960s and his antiwar clerical counterparts pouring blood on draft files.

And it is now evident in the activities of such groups as the Moral Majority. Headed by Rev. Falwell from his Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, the Moral Majority reaches an estimated 21,000,000 souls a week through *The Old Time Gospel Hour*, a television and radio show syndicated through nearly 700 stations. An average of \$1,000,000 a week is raised through the program.

What bothers not a few about the Moral Majority—and several other smaller though similar organizations like the Religious Roundtable and the National Christian Action Coalition—is that such stances as opposition to the Panama Canal and SALT II treaties, favoring increased defense spending, and opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, are equated with having a high degree of spirituality.

Another concern about the activities of the New Religious Right is the possibility of a "soft" cultural fascism descending upon the land. A couple months back, the American Civil Liberties Union bought a great deal of advertising space in most of the major newspapers in the country, including *Variety*. The headline read, "IF THE MORAL MAJORITY HAS ITS WAY, YOU'D BETTER START PRAYING." In part, the ad stated, "They want their religious doctrine enacted into law and imposed on everyone. If they believe that birth control is a sin, then you should not be allowed to use contraceptives. If they believe that abortion is wrong, then you should not be allowed to have one. If they believe that the Bible condemns homosexuality, then the law should punish homosexuals . . . their kind of 'patriotism' violates every principle of liberty that underlies the American system of government . . . (these) new evangelicals are a radical anti-Bill of Rights movement. Their agenda represents massive government intrusion. These groups have already had alarming success. They have been pivotal in blocking passage of the E.R.A. in 15

states. Public school boards all over the country have banned books and imposed prayer and other religious ceremonies . . . And there is mounting pressure to pass laws requiring the teaching of the Biblical account of creation as an alternative to evolution."

Pretty strong stuff. Is it possible that television is being skillfully employed to bring about an era of cultural oppression?

With this concern in mind I visited the studios of WCFC-TV, Channel 38 in Chicago and one of 35 religiously-oriented stations in operation nationwide. Among many other shows, WCFC broadcasts *The PTL Club*, *The 700 Club*, and *The Old Time Gospel Hour*. The biggies.

What struck me immediately about my surroundings was the total lack of opulence. I expected a good chunk of that \$500,000,000 had landed in the laps of the folks at Channel 38, but alas, I was confronted with a postage stamp size studio, cramped office space, and the underlying presence of financial panic.

I talked with station manager Harold Wheat about the station's operations; we also discussed my many concerns about how the Electronic Church may affect society.

I found out that one reason for the noncommercial station's chronic lack of funds is that a very nominal fee is charged the producers of the syndicated programming (which makes up about 75% of their daily schedule): about \$300 per half hour, and some time is donated free of charge.

Not just anyone who calls himself a fundamentalist and waves a Bible over a pulpit can get on the air at Channel 38. According to Wheat, "You will not see anyone selling prayer cloths on our station. Before we allow any programming to appear, it has to pass our standards for content, credibility, and proper business practices. This eliminates some of the more questionable religious programs you might see on other stations."

The name of a popular faith healer known for his animated theatrics and expensive toupe came up:

"No," said Wheat, "you won't find him on our channel. I am not doubting his sincerity or that he is doing the Lord's work, but we prefer a different type of approach."

I asked Mr. Wheat about the Moral Majority and what he thinks about it. Specifically, I asked if he thinks that opposition to the Panama Canal and SALT II treaties has anything to

do with Christianity.

"Not really."

What about the heavy emphasis placed on political activity by the Moral Majority? Does not social activism get in the way of—even replace—religious activity?

"It can, but I think there are some basic moral issues that are part of our Judeo-Christian beliefs that we must address. And then there are other areas we as a broadcasting body, or as a church, should stay away from. I agree with most of the points made by the Moral Majority, but not with all of them. You see, we broadcast a wide spectrum of re-

They do have to get involved."

Again, I stated my uneasiness about a repressive moral theocracy taking over in the future as the result of Christian broadcasting.

"I agree we have to be cautious about how we use the media. There is always the possibility of abuse with some of the shows on prime time and then we have people using television to bring others to God. We need to be good stewards of what He has given us because we are ultimately answerable to Him."

Amen, Mr. Wheat. But I am still not totally relieved.

Realistically, on a social level,

"Traditional family values"
are seen to be burning on a
pyre fueled by pornography,
alcoholism, socialism, drug abuse,
homosexuality, illegitimacy, and
rampant violent crime.

ligious ideas within an evangelical context."

I mentioned my concern that should the Moral Majority philosophy hold sway we could possibly see a day when homosexuals and drug users would be thrown en masse into stockades. I also mentioned that a certain fundamentalist interpretation of various Biblical passages condones capital punishment—indeed, stoning to death—for adultery, homosexuality, even for atheism.

"I understand your concern," Mr. Wheat smiled as he replied, "but God is a loving spirit. We cling to him in the midst of social chaos."

"There is," he continued, "some of the good and some of the bad in Moral Majority. There is something extremely good in the practice of letting Christians know what is going on and encouraging them to make themselves heard. Christians have been too passive for too many years.

what the Electronic Church wants is Puritanism, pure and simple. Puritanism is an old American tradition, a recurring philosophy throughout our history. It is repressive, self-righteous, and many times remorseless. It rears its head when enough people believe in it and draws its strength and comfort in their assembled number. My fear is that television is ushering in a new, even more repressive, Puritanism than this continent has ever seen.

In this day of concern for the rights of the individual in the face of an increasingly more complex and sophisticated technology ripe for abuse in certain hands, we should keep in mind that television can be just as much an instrument for oppression as a databank.

Despite the good intentions of those who make up the Electronic Church, they could, if not careful, construct not a Christian Utopia but a social hell.

I WAS
SELECTED
TO BE AN
IMPOSTER,
A LIAR FOR

TO TELL THE TRUTH

By Jack C. Harris

Illustration by Jerry Tiritilli





MY MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD me to tell the truth. My father taught me honesty was the best policy. And I believed them for a very long time. I was certain that no liar could ever earn an honest buck. For these reasons, I was always extremely careful to be truthful in all dealings.

But I discovered there are situations where I could lie . . . and still make that *honest* buck. I know that this sounds contradictory, but there have been hundreds of others who have gone before millions of television viewers and have lied—for money!

You see, I was one of those lucky few to be selected to be an imposter on one of television's best loved quiz shows. I was a liar for *To Tell The Truth*!

The opportunity came when, while working for a New York publishing company, I received a phone call from one Alan Kalter. He introduced himself as the announcer for *To Tell The Truth*. It seemed he wanted to get a supply of current publications to use in his job. To me, this sounded mysterious. How could someone use magazines in his job as an



Rex Reed, Stephani Cook, Gene Rayburn, and Sally Ann Howes make up the celebrity panelists on TO TELL THE TRUTH.

nouncer for a quiz show? My curiosity was soon satisfied as Alan invited me to view a taping of the new *To Tell The Truth* at New York's NBC studios.

* * *

The return of *To Tell The Truth* was uncharacteristic of today's television thinking. The Mark Goodson-Bill Todman production of the classic panel guessing game continues the tradition of "turn the camera around television" that made its predecessor one of the wittiest, cleverest, and most understated programs on the air.

It not only allows the audience to see a well-selected cross section of popular celebrities, but also offers the opportunity to let them meet some of their "own" who, because of some special ability, talent or other unusual notoriety, has come to the attention of the producers.

Every Thursday, The Truth Company staff gathers together all the equipment and personnel needed to tape a full week (five shows) of TTTT. During the three weeks of taping I attended, there was a total of 12 celebrities and 90 guests.

Even with this large number of nonprofessionals—many of whom had never before been in front of a camera—there were no hitches. Not a single inch of video tape had to be redone. The Truth Company operated like proverbial clockwork.

Whoops! You've caught me lying! There was one instance in which a program had to have a minute segment retaped. But it was due to my own participation in the show!

* * *

For the past 25 years—with but a two-year hiatus—*To Tell The Truth* has entertained audiences in prime time, daytime, and syndication. With a variety of hosts, regular celebrity players, and notable panelists, the show has endured the test of time.

It debuted in December, 1956 under the title of *Nothing But The Truth*. The original host was none other than Mike Wallace, years before his journalist/interviewer status on the controversial *60 Minutes*.

Gil Fates, the sparkly-eyed, gray-haired producer of TTTT (as well as the original *Nothing But The Truth*) remembers some of the initial problems the program faced in those early days.

"In those days, Mike Wallace was allowed to do both entertainment and news. Everything was going along fine. *Nothing But The Truth* was bought by CBS for a weekly nighttime slot. Then Mike announced he had to make a choice between us and the news. As everyone knows by now, news won and it was certainly the right move for him, but back then it left us with a sold show and no host."

Producer Fates at once hired Bud Collyer as the host of the now-named *To Tell The Truth*. Collyer had been given his baptism of fire in the Goodson-Todman stable as the host of the popular slapstick audience participation show, *Beat The Clock*. Only someone with the keenest of insights could have foreseen Collyer's easy transition as host of the sophisticated (as compared to *Beat The Clock*) *To Tell The Truth*. Collyer was the perfect host and remained with the program for its entire nighttime run.

The show changed little over the years, its popularity gaining with both a daily daytime version and a syndicated life with Gary Moore and Joe Garagiola as hosts. It finally left the airwaves in 1977—the producers believed it had run its course.

The format of the show was—and is—designed to appeal to a varied audience. With the host keeping the pace of the half-hour going, a panel of four celebrities questions three strangers, each claiming to be the same individual who has done or been involved in some incident that has made them notable, but not exactly world-famous or immediately recognizable. Each of these contestants is assigned a number by which he or she is addressed by the panelists during questioning.

In turn, the celebrities cross-examine the contestants; their only information being a statement the host has read aloud prior to the questioning. The statement supplies only the barest of essential information. Before the show begins, the two imposters are schooled in whatever field the central guest specializes in so that they can be convincingly dishonest. Only the central character has sworn "to tell the truth," but the others can either give true facts or make up convincing lies.

To Tell The Truth never has been a "big money" show. The imposters receive \$100 for every incorrect vote given by the four celebrities.

The original version usually had time for two complete games plus an end segment that would show-

case one of the central character's particular talents or feats. In the truest sense of the word, TTTT was the prototype for *Real People* and *That's Incredible*. The grabbers of this show are the "real people" who have come to the producers' (and public's) attention by some "incredible" incident in their lives.

* * *

Gerry Chester is the executive vice president of Goodson-Todman, and it was his idea to bring about a new version of *To Tell The Truth* for the '80s. In order to convince Viacom (TTTT's syndicators) that bringing back the show was a good idea, Chester and his associates had to present some updated and fresh ideas for what was thought to be an old-fashioned quiz show.

Gil Fates explained: "It was a collaborative effort. Everything was going to move faster, giving us time for a new, extra spot. The questioning is much crisper. All the writing is shorter. The whole thing is much, much faster."

For the new audiences tuning in to *To Tell The Truth*, the one unfamiliar aspect of the show will be the last segment. It is a new "game within a game" entitled "One On One."

In the original casting of *To Tell The Truth*, the imposters were often selected to contrast the main guest, and this is still done to a certain extent. Now the four imposters from *To Tell The Truth*'s two main segments return at the conclusion of the show. It is then revealed that one of them has a secret or strange quality that the celebrities must learn.

The name One On One is derived from the fact that the celebrities may only question the guest directly across from them and for only 20 seconds. Afterwards, they then must give a "yes" or "no" answer as to whether or not that particular person was telling the truth.

"Actually this is very good," brags Producer Fate, "It puts a capper on the show. With One On One, you bring the elements of those two spots into a finale. It was like *What's My Line?*, which had an occupation, then another occupation, and then a mystery guest. It puts an end to the show."

As part of the modernization program, The Truth Company cast an entirely new panel of celebrities. After viewing the first few weeks' tapes, Viacom executives began to ask, "Where's Kitty Carlisle? Where's Soupy Sales?" It seemed the old favorites would be harder to forget than anyone had imagined. The

Truth Company decided to compromise and add some of the celebrity panelists who made the show famous in years gone by. Ironically, this practice of changing the panel completely from week to week has brought the show its only bit of bad press, as *TV Guide* complained they have yet to identify the *To Tell The Truth* panel.

If *TV Guide* is seeking consistency, they shall find it in TTTT's new host. Fitting in with the "new faces" concept is Robin Ward, a newcomer hailing from Canada. Goodson-Todman had produced a Canadian version of *What's My Line?* and Robin was one of the Canadians selected as a panelist. He proved very popular and was hired for the lead in the new U.S. show.

* * *

My own association with *To Tell The Truth* began last August when I took announcer Alan Kalter up on his offer to attend one of the Thursday tapings.

In recent years, the security at NBC has been tightened, but my

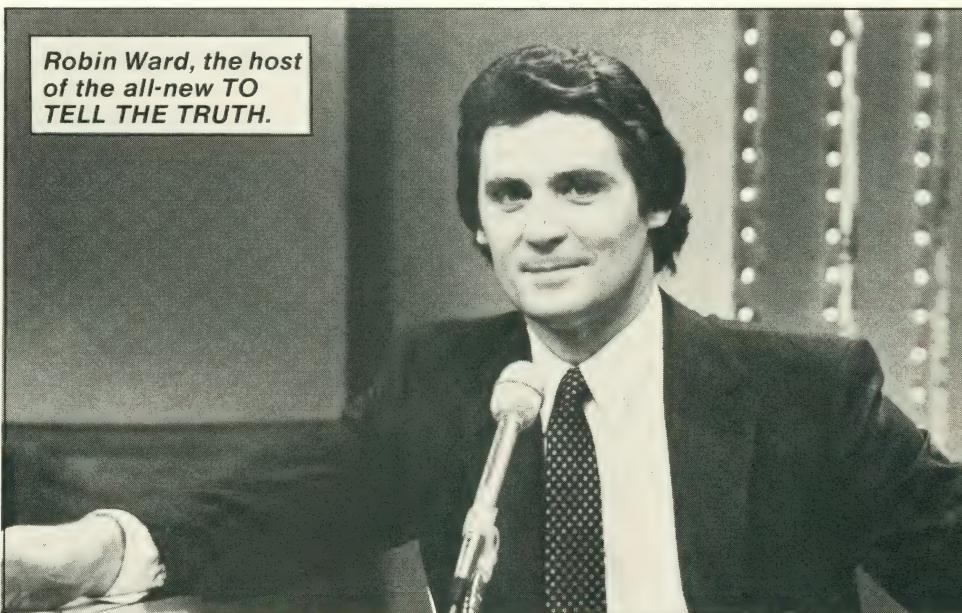
having a marvelous time.

Alan greeted me as I entered the lower part of the studio. The entire ceiling was covered with what seemed like a thousand arc lamps on huge metal tracks, ensuring lighting from every possible angle. I had come in during a break in the taping. Since they tape three shows in the morning and three in the afternoon, I had come in sometime between the Monday and Tuesday show. The celebrities and host had gone to their dressing rooms to change clothes, creating the illusion they were coming in and doing a new show every day.

As soon as Alan had rushed me to a seat, he darted up front to tape the promotion spots for the different prizes that were awarded to the contestants. In addition to doing these spots, Alan also introduces the show. His is the famous line, "Number One, what is your name?" But clearly his most important and memorable job is keeping the audience "prepared" during the times before and between the five shows.

A Howdy Doody look-alike (his

Robin Ward, the host of the all-new TO TELL THE TRUTH.



name was at the security desk so I quickly found myself on the 8th floor outside studio 8H. Alan had asked me to arrive at 11:30, but my schedule made me an hour late. I could hear laughter from the studio audience as I peeked through a back stage opening. The set of *To Tell The Truth* was to my left and the studio audience to my right. It was obvious from the lack of celebrities and the presence of a few dozen technicians on the set that the show was not being taped at that moment. However, it still seemed that the audience was

own description), Alan Kalter is a man who truly enjoys his work. He first came to the attention of Mark Goodson after announcing for ABC. "I used to do radio," Alan recalls, "I worked for WTMF on Long Island, and before that, WHLI in Hempstead, New York. The last station I worked at was WHLN before it became a country and western station. When it 'turned country,' I left."

"I became the announcer on *The Money Maze*. I had a ball on the show. I'd lead the audience as we watched spouses guide one an-

other through an eight-foot-high maze that led to different prizes. What I learned on *that* show was that you can get an audience to enjoy it by becoming the number one person *in* the audience. You'd have a ball and get the audience to have fun as well.

"That was my first show. It led to a number of other things in New York and these led to Mark Goodson calling me up for *To Tell The Truth* four years ago when Gary Moore, and later Joe Garagiola, were hosting. Now I'm back with Robin Ward. I won't move to California, so hopefully, I'll be doing this in New York for a number of years."

It was clear audiences appreciate Alan's dedication to his work. From 10 AM to 5:30 PM every Thursday, Alan jokes with them, has them rehearse clapping, yelling, and cheering, plays trivia (which explains his need for current publications) and generally creates a highly positive atmosphere that can be felt at home as well as by the celebrities on the set.

Alan also enjoys fielding questions from the audience. On my first visit, someone questioned him on how the imposters were selected for the show. He explained that applications were taken from the studio audience themselves. All that was needed to apply was that the person be able to be in the New York City area during a given two-week period prior to the scheduled appearance.

I was very excited about the prospect of appearing on TTTT and questioned Alan on it myself after

the morning's taping. Backstage, he introduced me to Susan Handy, one of the casting directors for *The Truth Company*.

Susan is one of three casting directors whose task is to seek out and interview prospective TTTT impostaers. The job includes poring over hundreds of newspapers, making hundreds of phone calls, and conducting hundreds of interviews for the 20 people needed each week. Five of those people must

Only the "real" person has sworn to "tell the truth" —the others can either give real facts or make up convincing lies.

have some special notoriety that will allow them to appear as the central character on the One On One segment. It is a complex and difficult assignment. Susan invited me up to *The Truth Company* for an interview the following Monday.

When I arrived I was handed a green card: they asked my name, address, occupation, and other things of a general nature. They also made sure that I was not known to any of the panelists and that I had not made any other recent television appearances.

After truthfully filling out the card

(the lying would come later), I was led by Susan to her office for an informal chat. She also took out her Polaroid camera and snapped a photo to be attached to my little green card. She told me that each week the casting staff pulls out the green card file and selects the imposters for the upcoming shows. She bade me good-bye and I returned home, not knowing my fate.

A few weeks later I received a call from *The Truth Company*. I was scheduled to appear on a fall taping. The following Monday I hurried back over to their offices to pick up my first bit of background material on the man I was to impersonate. An envelope was waiting for me at the reception desk with a newspaper article about one Michael Minton, a dynamic young lawyer who had set the legal precedent on the annual wage a housewife would make if she demanded payment from her husband.

Being an old *Perry Mason* fan, I figured that I would have no trouble at all pretending to be a law school graduate. However, I did call a few lawyer friends to discuss at great length the language of "legalese." It had to be the world's quickest "paper chase." Charles W. Kingsfield, Jr. never would have approved.

After one postponement (due to the unavailability of Mr. Minton) I was scheduled for a September 27th appearance. I arrived at studio 8H at 8 AM, dressed in my "lawyer costume," a blue three-piece suit.

This was an enlightening experience. First to arrive, I seated myself



Here are two examples of the kind of people found on the new TO TELL THE TRUTH: One of these three women is Elizabeth Kane. Through artificial insemination, she will bear another couple's child.

in the deserted studio audience. It was quite eerie. There were five cameras on the stage and the *To Tell The Truth* set was assembled before me, completely lit. Two floor monitors and one suspended from the ceiling were silently broadcasting test patterns.

In reality, the place was in full swing. The control room was out of my sight, but filled with technicians testing equipment and making sure the entire taping would not meet with any snags. One by one, the monitors snapped to life, each showing a different portion of the set. Stagehands began to appear, setting up stools, moving lights and cameras and doing a thousand and one other things that made the place come alive right before my eyes.

Soon, other "normal" people began to arrive; the rest of the imposters and central characters congregated in the studio audience, each excited about being a participant.

Producer Fates later confessed TTTT often finds itself in competition with *Real People* and *That's Incredible*. Finding people for the show is easier because of taping in New York. Fates said, "There's not the 'ethnic spread' needed for this show in California. There everyone tries to look alike. They're all healthy and have good tans. You can't tell a plumber from a successful surgeon."

When everybody had arrived, it was clear Mr. Fates' philosophy was true. The 20 imposters and the five real people represented a wide

range of occupations and backgrounds. I marveled at how the casting staff had assembled such a group, and how they did so each and every week.

Without any direction from the staff, each of the groups of two imposters and their real life counterparts clustered together and began discussing their individual lies. I was soon joined by Michael Minton and a vice president of a New York watch firm, who had been selected to be the second "Minton imposter." He too had come in a three piece suit.

After about one-half hour, a stagehand called our name ("the Minton group") and we were told that our segment was to be first. We followed the person through the TTTT set and backstage. It's an eye-opener to realize that those classy-looking sets for shows such as TTTT are made from the cheapest and lightest materials. Cardboard, properly painted and lit looks remarkably like the highest quality wood when seen on television.

Stepping across thick electrical cable and ducking under low-hanging lights, we made our way backstage and up a narrow staircase to a lounge that overlooked studio 8H. There we were officially briefed. We also signed very official-looking release forms and made up a whole different set of fibs for the One On One segment. One of the lady imposters on our show's second segment had been a silver medalist in the 1968 Munich Olympics. We had

to make up fictitious events in which we too were supposedly Olympic champions. I chose cycling while my fellow imposter chose riflery. We told whoppers until we almost convinced each other!

After our briefing, we were taken to a waiting area backstage. Here we could sit and watch a large color monitor that showed us the goings-on out on the set. There was also a table piled high with bagels and an urn of hot coffee.

We were told that the same studio was re-set every week for NBC's *Saturday Night Live*. And, as I later learned, the entire set has now been moved two floors down to studio 6A. But since everything is portable, there would be no way for the viewing audience to know that the show is being taped at a different location.

Since "The Minton Group" was the first to tape, our rehearsal came first. We began by standing behind three doors. I was to be Number Three, Bruce was Number One, and Michael, the real McCoy, was Number Two. At the edge of the swinging door frame were tiny microphones. The director instructed us to yell (well, speak loudly) when asked, "What is your name?"

The director then instructed us on how to get into the chairs behind the desk where we would sit during questioning. The chairs are on small tracks, allowing for only limited movement and he wanted to make certain we were able to get seated without falling on our faces. Every



One of these three women is Kathy Ann Wildey, a member of the first graduating class in the history of the United States Military Academy to have women in its ranks.

such precaution was being made all down the line.

About 10 AM, the rehearsals began. We were presented through the three doors as if it were the real thing. I heard Alan Kalter's voice asking us all our names after the doors swung open on cue from the

them in before. It gave us a unique opportunity to see what these people "really" look like.

We were then run through our own One On One rehearsal, with the actors once again in the place of the panelists. I was in the second seat this time and would be directly

one case of retaping of which I am aware. Barry Nelson's final question to me was, "How has winning an Olympic medal changed your life?"

Having no response to such a query, I quipped, "Well, it got me a silver medal." That got a laugh from the audience, but convinced Mr.

'The hesitation and the fake movements are worked out in advance to heighten that last moment of suspense'

director. We sat down and the questioning began. The panelists for this rehearsal were all actors, chosen for these "roles" more for their intelligence than any acting ability. We actually played a mini-game, with real-host Robin Ward keeping the game moving much faster than during an actual broadcast. The four actors had neither spoken to nor met any of us before, so the whole thing was like the real show. The only difference here was the speed at which we played and the fact that there was no audience save for The Truth Company staff.

Once again backstage, Alan Kalter met me. We had not spoken since that first day, and he was surprised when he saw me walk out of door number three. Always thinking of his duties, Alan asked if I had any friends who were going to attend the show. I did, and Alan scribbled down their names, preparing for some good-natured ribbing that would keep this day's audience properly "prepped."

After the rehearsals for the guests were concluded, we were all asked to remain in the backstage waiting area. It was time for the celebrities' rehearsal, and they did not want them to get any advance look at us.

For their run-through, the celebrities played a round of One On One. This time, the four actors who had questioned us were in the roles of the One On One contestants. The celebrities were an interesting cross-section. The producers try to get one "funny face," one "new face," a "serious face," and a TTTT "old face" for each program week. The panelists who would question us were Soupy Sales, Lynn Redgrave, Barry Nelson, and Kitty Carlisle. While we watched them, a make-up man came in and touched us up with a minimum of cosmetics. It was an interesting contrast. The celebrities rehearsing sans make-up looked remarkably different over the monitor than they did in the shows we had all seen

across from Barry Nelson, who would be my sole questioner in the final segment.

Seated to my left was the woman who had been the actual Olympic Silver Medalist. The director however was telling the stagehand to give me the medal. The staging of the revelation of the real people on *To Tell The Truth* is all worked out in advance. The hesitation and the fake movements are all done to heighten that last moment of suspense. My having the medal was part of the routine.

The taping was about to begin. It was a little after noon and, from backstage, I could hear Alan prepping the audience. Suddenly, we heard the recorded music and Alan's voice asking "Number One, what is your name?" With that, the doors opened. I was happy being Number Three. This way, I got to hear two others say, "My name is Michael Minton" before I had to speak.

Subconsciously, the panelists asked us questions in numerical order. By the time they got to me, their time had run short. Subsequently, Bruce (Number One) got three votes and Michael received one. Bruce had attended law school some time ago and was able to talk very convincing "legalese." We split the incorrect votes money.

After our segment, the set electrically swung us backstage where we rejoined the other guests in the waiting area. By this time, we had all become like a big, happy family and we were congratulated by everyone on our performances. It seemed like only seconds passed before we were called to seat ourselves behind the One On One desk and were once again swung out onto the lit stage.

I sat there with the silver medal under my hands, hidden from view of the panelists. During the rapid questioning from Barry Nelson, I was indirectly responsible for the

Nelson that I was not an Olympic cyclist as I claimed.

"Is Jack an Olympic winner?" asked Robin Ward, to which Mr. Nelson replied a quick and positive "No!"

Laughing at the positiveness of the reply, Robin remarked to me, "See what you get for being a wiseass?" The line never made it to the airwaves. Upon later viewing, the camera on me, the viewing audience hears Robin's voice say, "See what you get for being a smart-a**" Robin had to retape the line at the end of the day to make sure that no one would be offended by his slip of the tongue. The laughter he got from the studio audience seems strangely out of proportion when later seeing the show broadcast.

When revelation time came, we all stood up, I with the silver medal held out in front of me. For a second, Barry Nelson was stunned, not believing he could have been so wrong. Then, I turned and placed the silver medal around the neck of its real owner.

The final segment of the show allowed us to all go out and meet and speak with the celebrities. I finally got to speak to Soupy Sales, a long-time idol.

The final fun was the receipt of my check. I would be telling the truth to say that I would have done it without any payment at all. I also received a case of exotic soap and a tooth polisher. These products are given away to contestants in exchange for a plug on the air.

I put the money into my daughter's bank account, I kept the tooth polisher and I gave away the soap as stocking gifts to my family during Christmas. I didn't tell them where I got the soap, letting them believe that I had gone out of the way to buy them this special, expensive, and unique gift. And I got away with it too. It must have been because of my vast experience...as a liar! ■

PLAY BY PLAY

(Continued from page 35)

Kiel Olympiad

Boating, 27 min., Pyramid Films

Yes, the Olympics even has yachting races. This one took place in the North Sea off Kiel Harbor in West Germany. This movie generated enough excitement to win a CINE Golden Eagle.

Kitemen

Aviation, 14 min., American Cable Network; Sports World Cinema

The water wonderland of Cypress Gardens, Florida attracts all kinds, including kite flyers. Somehow they have managed to invent a skiing-kite flying race and start a tournament.

The Magic Rolling Board

Skateboarding, 15 min., Pyramid Films

It is fantastic to see what some clever young people have been able to do with the innocuous skateboard I used to run into the lawn. This award-winning film artistically showcases the feats and skills of these boarders.

Men's USSR Gymnastics Tour

Gymnastics, 19 min., Champions on Film

A three-part program featuring the grace and strength of three Russian gymnasts: Nicolai Andianov, Alexander Ditiation, and Vladimir Alimanov.

Miracle of Lake Placid: Highlights of the 1980 Winter Olympics

Olympics, 90 min., Magnetic Video

These games were the greatest boon to American patriotism since fireworks. Eric Heiden's speed skating feats, and the incredibly exciting climb of the U.S. hockey team to the gold medal make this a must for the sports library.

1976 Summer and Winter Olympic Games

Olympics, 112 min., Sports World Cinema; Fotomat

Remember Bruce Jenner, Sugar Ray Leonard, Nadia Comenici, and Olga Korbut? They became events in 1976. This film will remind you of what they did before they went endorsement happy.

The Pigs vs. the Freaks

Football, 15 min., Pyramid Films

Award-winning portrayal of a confrontation between college students and police. Surprisingly enough, it was on a football field near the Michigan State campus.

Ski-Vision Two

Skiing, 30 min., TV Sports Scene

Yes, I know we're a little top-heavy with ski programs, but check out this interview line-up: Suzy Chaffee, Omar Sharif, Gerald Ford, and the Shah of Iran!

SKI-VISION TWO features quite a line-up of celebrities— **Suzy Chaffee, Omar Sharif and the Shah of Iran!**



Pumping Iron

Body building, 85 min., Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; Time-Life Video

Absolutely absorbing view of the histrionics of the Mr. Olympia competition, and the teeth-grinding discipline of body building. A psychological thriller featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mike Katz, Franco Columbo, and Lou (Hulk) Ferrigno.

Rodeo

Rodeo, 20 min., Phoenix Films

This is what a real rodeo looks like. It's a handy guide for the urban cowboy home decorator.

Sailing Hour #1

Boating, 54 min., Sports World Cinema

Another potentially patriotic program dealing with the 1977 America's Cup race. America owes a lot to the video world for this one; Ted Turner kept up his winning streak with his yacht, *Courageous*.

Secretariat

Horses, 30 min., New York Racing Association

Biography of the great Triple Crown winner culled from personal interviews with trainer Lucien Laurin, jockey Ron Turcotte, and owner Penny Tweedy.

Sky Dive

Sky diving, 15 min., Pyramid Films

I have the greatest admiration for people who are capable of doing intriguing aerial stunts while plunging at an incredible speed through the sky, possibly to their last good-bye. This film won many awards, and it gets mine for video vertigo.

Soccer for Everyone

Soccer, 120 min., Sports World Cinema

Two programs, *The Action Skills* and *Understanding the Game*, which should tell Americans everything they need to know in order to get hip with the rest of the world. (But they will never get us to call it "football.")

The Son of Football Follies

Football, 30 min., NFL Films

Famous bloopers of the gridiron made totally ridiculous by the slippery, silly commentary of Mel Blanc.

The Special Olympics

Olympics-handicapped, 15 min., Media Guild

Handicapped and retarded children have their day when this very special sporting event pits

(Continued on page 64)

The cable TV public access stations are opening up a variety of television programming opportunities—and more than a handful of jobs as well.

Public access provides a much-needed forum for on-camera talent. Barbara Marshall smiles for a Madison Community Access Center camera.

YOU CAN BE A TV PRODUCER





By Ann DeLarye

T IS 8 PM, TELEVISION TIME. You switch on the tube to the hesitant female voice, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen; welcome to Rastafarian Folk Dancing" (switch!) . . . "it's great to see you, Bob, here on The Smithville Gourmet" (switch!) . . . "round of applause for Smithville Mayor Ralph Smith!" (switch!) . . . you change a

few more times until you find the call-in show with the local sex therapist, and settle in for a good evening of solid self-comparison . . .

The good, the bad, and the ugly summarizes the programming currently to be found on cable television's public access channels. Amateurs and their first attempts at production are shown along with commercial broadcasting professionals' works too experimental to

be sold to the networks.

Public access was born in the early 1970s when the Federal Communications Commission ruled yet again that the airwaves belong to the people—even if they are carried on a coaxial cable. A specified amount of time had to be set aside for community residents by every cable company. The residents were to be free to do *anything*.

Today, cable companies are no

longer required by the Federal Communications Commission to provide such public access time. Many communities, however, insist that such provisions be made before they allow a cable company to wire their area. Additionally, the companies may be expected to build and equip television studios for public use.

Some public access channels lease their time, meaning one must pay to put on shows. Other public access channels are brokered through a middleman who pays for the airtime and then tries to find producers and sponsors to buy it from him for a profit. Most public access channels are free to those we can fill them with programming.

However public access channels are set up, they mean a quiet but profound revolution is taking place in the way we relate to our electronic tube. Television is no longer a passive medium.

Now you too can make television; perhaps even make a living doing so right in your own backyard. And now is the time, while public access is still relatively wide-open, to get out of your living room, behind a camera and onto the airwaves. Within lies your best shot at a video career.

Because public access channels are accessible literally to anyone who cares to place programming on them, the reputation they enjoy is not exactly top-caliber. "Blue" programs like the nude talk show *Interludes After Midnight* on New York City's leased Channel J draw the national attention of the press while the dozens of worthwhile and informative local education shows languish ignored.

Center. The Center is touted by many as one of the most dynamic and successful public access facilities in the country, with some of its programming having been nominated for a local Emmy award.

"One of the advantages that a local access center like ours provides is a training facility outside of a college environment," Voss continues. "We get people here who want a chance to learn, a chance to exercise their knowledge. They also get to learn what it is like to work under some pretty high-pressure conditions. We give them an opportunity to show their wares, look at their own stuff and find out whether they are really suited for this kind of work."

Carl Kucharski, executive director of the Madison, Wisconsin Community Access Center, believes, "Public access is probably the most under-utilized medium for expression and learning in the country. If anybody is looking for a way to learn their craft prior to applying for a job, the best they can do for themselves is to get actual hands-on experience. Public access is definitely a good resume credit."

No matter what level of technical or artistic skill you possess—even if you have never been to college—public access is clearly a way to develop skills in video. According to the *Broadcasting Yearbook 1980*, there are over 4,200 operating cable systems in the United States serving 10,200 communities. If your community is not one them, no doubt it will be wired within a few years. Over 20% of the nation's TV households—44 million people—have coaxial cables feeding their television sets at this very moment. And almost all are reached by some kind of public access channel.

Despite these impressive sounding figures, no one is quite sure whether anyone is really watching public access channels—or even cable television itself. The television ratings services are only now beginning to undergo the tremendous technological and data-gathering changes necessary to measure effectively the cable audience. When administrators of public access centers talk of "successful" shows, they are relying largely on letters, phone calls, personal feedback . . . and estimation.

Public access facilities are as individual as the communities they serve. Every locale has made different demands upon the cable companies to which its franchise was awarded. Some public access centers use half-inch videotape with outdated black and white equipment and little staff, others use three-quarter-inch color with modern equipment and a full complement of support staff.

Many public access facilities are, as Jerry Voss noted, training centers. Any community resident can go to the center and learn how to operate the equipment, from portable cameras to complex video switchers and, if available, special effects generators. Much of the time such training is free; when it is not, there is a nominal (around \$20) charge.

In Madison's Community Access Center, Director Carl Kucharski reports, "In two and a half years we have trained almost 1,700 people." Some of these people have gone on to video careers; others remain involved with the Center while others move or simply drop out.

Public access centers are great for video freaks who cannot afford to own their own equipment—once trained, a person is allowed to use the equipment to produce his or her own show. Those who do own video cassette recorders and cameras, however, generally will find public access a ready forum for their home-produced wares. According to Don Smith, president of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, many public access facilities have the equipment to air half-inch Beta and VHS tapes.

Access facilities may also provide editing equipment to those who do the rest of the work on their own hardware, an exciting potential for home video producers.

Placing programming on free public access channels incurs little in the way of out-of-pocket costs for the producer. The cable company may pick up the tab for equipment and time on the one or more public access channels it offers: a channel may be programmed entirely by an independent, non-profit, grant-supported organization, as in San Diego; or local consortiums of schools, government, citizens, and business may contribute.

In the 10,200 wired communities there are nearly 10,200 ways of supporting public access. Most independent video producers only pick up the tab for sets or talent expenses.

Typical producers are people in their late 20s looking to start or further their video careers. They have little real experience and often must hold down full-time jobs while working on public access in their spare time.

"This is a place for pre-professionals and for non-professionals," admits Jerry Voss, executive director of the San Diego Community Video

which need not run much more than \$10 to \$20 (if that) for a simple show.

The real key to using public access as a career steppingstone lies in coming up with good programming ideas. The difference between commercial broadcasting and cable is that with public access you can appeal to a much smaller audience without being penalized. You can, in effect, "narrowcast." Many of the most successful public access shows aired currently do just that.

In Madison, Wisconsin, a program called *Perspective '81* being aired on public access is directed specifically to that city's black population. The idea has been picked up by the NBC local affiliate and is being done as a weekend talk show with a different cast and crew.

A show called *Coast Watch '80* was aired by the San Diego Community Video Center to appeal to those concerned about beaches and the surrounding environment. It was the first live program the Center had ever produced—and it was nominated for a local Emmy award.

Shows have been developed about local history, preventive medicine, community political issues and candidates, in-town sports events and personalities...the possibilities are there for the astute would-be producer.

Perhaps most importantly, public access centers bring jobs—both paid and volunteer—to the areas they serve. In addition to producing programs, there is a great variety of full-time jobs to be had in the administrative, technical and clerical ends.

Ann Johnson, a member of the task force currently engaged in choosing a cable company for the coveted Evanston, Illinois market, has become well-versed in the public access offerings of the major cable companies. She lists just some of the job openings public access facilities can make available in larger metropolitan markets: tape librarian, typist, equipment production assistant, executive director, graphic artist, receptionist, associate director of finance, equipment clerk, administrative assistant, assistant video producer, bookkeeper, programmer, community coordinator, viewing center coordinator, staff writer, associate director of production, associate director of community relations, and grant writers. That covers considerable ground.

In smaller communities, many of these needs would be filled by volunteers, but even the smallest centers employ at least two people full-time—usually one administrator and one clerical

person.

Again, every public access center is different. Jerry Voss describes the San Diego staff: "I have a programmer to program the two channels. I have a production chief who is in charge of all the production we do. We have what we call an 'arts producer'—this is a special position funded by a grant from the California Arts Council to do video art and teach it to students. I have one individual called a 'project coordinator' who helps in writing the grants, with public relations and in making contacts within the community with independent producers. And we have a receptionist/secretary."

There will be a critical need for people to act as liaisons between community organizations and access centers. These community coordinators are responsible for contacting local organizations, learning about their functions and their needs, and making suggestions as to how these groups can best make use of public access.

The skills involved are more than the aesthetic visualization all producers must have: such people also need the ability to organize material into comprehensive, informative and entertaining shows. The shortage of people with video and community relations backgrounds is even now beginning to be felt.

The pay scales for public access full-time positions vary from community to community. Ms. B.J. Morgan, director of community programming for Storer Broadcasting (one of the largest cable companies), notes, "This is not a high-paid field at present until you get up into the executive areas. Broadcasting generally has been a low-paid field.



At the Madison Community Access Center, a career in video means an early start, as the four-year-old behind the camera proves.

represent the overview, and vary from place to place.

As a training ground for the real world, public access is unbeatable. Carl Kucharski of Madison's Center began there as a production employee and is now director. The Center's program coordinator began as a volunteer in production. "There have been several people who were volunteers here who are now working for the cable company," relates Kucharski. "Our particular cable company does not have many full-time employees and does not do too much of its own production, but many have become part-time technicians and cable-casters."

For a number of years, the television field has been a closed shop. Claims Jerry Voss, "For every position that exists in the television industry, there are 15 new graduates every year."

But with cable, the field is starting to open up. According to Storer's Morgan, "This whole country is going to be wired within the next two to three years. You are talking about thousands of jobs."

People who would not normally think of television as having any-

ODUCERYOUCANBEATVPROD ODUCERYOUCANBEATVPROD

You're talking \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year on the lower rungs, and you go up from there with your skills and expertise."

Don Smith breaks it down more precisely: administrators' pay runs into the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range; producers and similar creative people earn \$16,000 to \$18,000, and clerical support people get \$8,000 to \$10,000. These figures, of course,

thing to do with their careers may find cable opens up some surprising possibilities. Teachers with video experience, for instance, will be in great demand for "university of the airwaves" types of courses.

"Suppose a person is an education or a math major," explains Voss. "He can improve his skills in a particular career area by using video, and finding out ways the medium can be

Public access centers are great for video freaks who cannot afford their own equipment —once trained, a person is allowed use of the equipment.

used further.

"Corporations and organizations are using video for training and for general information. They are producing many in-house programs. Working on public access would be a good way to apprentice for a job working with such a corporation. If you read the trade magazines, you see many positions available for experienced video producers and you cannot get experience unless you are working somewhere."

Marketing executives, computer programmers, and research and development specialists also will find work in public access. Beverly Land, vice president for corporate development at Storer Broadcasting suggested during a recent meeting of the Women In Communications organization. The two-way capacity recently developed and implemented

performers who started in public access programs have gone on to local and network exposure.

In Madison, for example, "We have had a group of students from the meteorology department of the University of Wisconsin doing a daily five-minute weather report," relates Kucharski. "About 60% of them have gone on to broadcasting some kind of weather information. Many of them are on local radio, and several are now the main anchors at the local commercial stations."

Overall, Kucharski adds, "Several of the programs that were started here spawned ideas for commercial programs—people have gone on to bigger and better things because of the initial productions they started here."

B.J. Morgan sums it up nicely: "One aspect of local programming that I think is very important is that it is a showcase for local talent. There is no place to go anymore—commercial television cannot do it; nightclubs have become prohibitively expensive and people who have talent and who want to get into the field have a dickens of a time. That is a shame—I think our whole national arts program could be enriched if we could develop this."

The cable companies themselves are beginning to train people for cable jobs, especially on the technical side. TelePrompter, the nation's largest cable company, recently established a training institute outside St. Louis for cable television technicians and installers. They are actively recruiting women and minorities for training in these fields. Interested parties should contact

There are so many unanswered questions. "This whole thing of unions and residuals is undergoing a great deal of re-examination," Morgan asserts. "I do not think it has been fully dealt with yet, and I do not know where it is going to land."

Carl Kucharshki has not had cause to worry on that score—yet. "Several people from the local stations (not all of which are unionized) have come down and directed, produced, run cameras, and so on, and we have never had any union problems whatsoever," he claims. At least thus far. "It might become a problem in the future if anyone here ever gets paid for producing or running a camera."

Ann Johnson of the Evanston task force looks back at the gigantic technological strides that have been made in the past few years. "When we started looking at cable in 1974, they were talking about the 'television of abundance' and that was 20 channels. But with systems currently being installed that have 54 channels, programming is needed by every cable operator, and I think they now perceive the community as a source of programming."

"I believe cable outfits are sincere in their offers to help a community get started in public access," Johnson continues. "There will be some income from the subscriber who only wants local programming."

"I think public access is going to mature into something called *community programming*," predicts Kucharski. "It is difficult to fund public access because in the minds of people who donate money, public access is a little too open, loose, raunchy, and weird to support. I have a feeling it is not going to be as wide-open as it was in the past."

Jerry Voss gives the most far-reaching view, and one with which many of his peers would disagree: "I think we are where public television was 25 years ago, and unfortunately they have lost touch with the people. I hope this never happens to us."

"The '80s are going to make public access. They will come out of this tight little social club of people who have a 'nice hobby' attitude and really start serving people."

"Public access can grow as large and as influential as public broadcast television. Cable television is the way to go if you are looking for a career in television, and local access is just a portion of the picture. Cable is state-of-the-art—broadcast television is a passing thing."

EVERYONE CAN BE A TV PRODUCER

by a number of cable companies will demand new kinds of software for home security, banking, data retrieval and many other functions; these will have to be developed and marketed.

And these are just the people behind the scenes. The opportunity for on-camera performers is quite promising as well. Already, some

the TelePrompter Training Institute at 4150 Old Mill Parkway, St. Charles, Missouri 63301, (314) 441-7490. Similar training centers are expected to surface across the nation.

Right now, public access is loose, flexible, and open to almost anything; but will the situation continue to be this way through the 1980s and beyond?

Future cable producers of America! Are you as inventive and aware of your community as the people currently filling public access "airwaves?" See if the following examples, graciously supplied by Jerry Voss of the San Diego Community Video Center and Carl Kucharski of the Madison Community Access Center, don't inspire you:

From San Diego:

***Take Five**—On this show, any man, woman or child in the San Diego area gets five minutes of free air time to say or do virtually anything they want. Often the program is public service oriented, for example allowing the plight of battered women to be discussed. But anything goes, and musicians, comedians, and writers join concerned citizens in reaching out to the community.

***KSON Travelin' Road Show**—One of the most popular of the community access shows in San Diego. In conjunction with radio station KSON, the show caters to the growing popularity and demand for country western music. Features local country and western clubs.

***What's The Big Idea?**—A show on which inventors from all over the United States meet and discuss their new contraptions.

***Student Showcase**—Each week a different area school features video projects produced by its own students.

From Madison:

***Inflation Survival**—A show produced jointly by the Madison Inflation Survival Council and the First Wisconsin National Bank. Thirteen half-hour episodes cover practical ways to minimize the impact of inflation on such necessities as food, clothing, housing, energy, and medical care.

***Vets Hour**—Aimed at the special concerns of Vietnam War veterans, this weekly show has covered among other topics

**And now
for some-
thing
you'll
really
like!**

employment problems, psychological stress, and the Agent Orange controversy.

***Glad To Be Gay**—Produced by Madison area Gay Rights advocates, this show has discussed such varying topics as health care, violence against gays, and gay Cuban refugees at a nearby refugee camp.

***Thank You For Smoking Pot**—Bob Kundert, president of the American Cannabis Society, discusses the campaign for the legalization of marijuana.

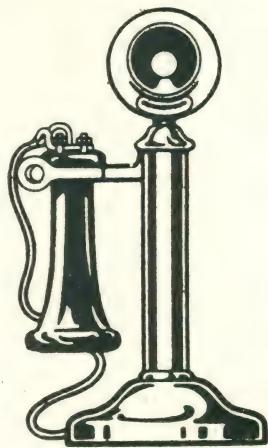
Now if you cannot think of anything you might do after reading this list... don't despair. Look around you—it will come!

—A. D.

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**VIDEO
ACTION**

NEW RELEASES

MAGNETIC VIDEO (tape) (23434 Industrial Park Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48201)

Brief Encounter—(1974), romantic story of two people and a love affair that was not meant to be. This ABC made-for-television movie stars Sophia Loren and Richard Burton. Directed by Alan Bridges.

Madame Sin—(1971), Madame Sin lives in a world of bizarre futuristic science and weaponry and is the power behind a financial empire. Ex-CIA agent Anthony Lawrence falls under her powerful spell and desperately tries to thwart her greatest heist. Starring Bette Davis and Chatherine Schell. Directed by David Greene.

The Big Sleep—(1978), Robert Mitchum does a reprise performance as Philip Marlowe, the hard-bitten but soft-hearted Los Angeles detective immortalized in the Raymond Chandler mysteries. He again encounters life-or-death situations in the course of a complex case of blackmail. With Sarah Miles, Richard Boone, Candy Clark, Joan Collins, Edward Fox, John Mills, and James Stewart. Directed by Michael Winner.

March Or Die—(1977), The story of the French Foreign Legion; film culminates in a spectacular battle sequence and features good performances by Gene Hackman, Terence Hill, Max von Sydow, Ian Holm, and Catherine Deneuve. Directed by Dick Richards.

The Moon Is Blue—(1953), saucy comedy about a love triangle, morality, and sincerity. Starring David Niven, Maggie McNamara, Tom Tully, and Dawn Addams. Directed by Otto Preminger.

The Medusa Touch—(1978), powerful suspense psycho-thriller about a man both blessed and cursed with an incredible gift: the power to cause disasters of unlimited magnitude. John Morlar, the main character, has spent his life unwillingly using his gift, starting with the killing of his hated nanny and parents, but as an adult he begins using it deliberately when no one can absolve him of his curse. Starring Richard Burton, Lino

Ventura, and Lee Remick. Directed by Jack Gold.

At Long Last Love—(1975), the critically unacclaimed Peter Bogdanovich musical spectacular intended as a salute to the great song-and-dance musicals of the 1930s. Starring Burt Reynolds, Cybill Shepherd, Madeline Kahn, Duilio Del Prete, Eileen Brennan, John Hillerman, and Mildred Natwick.

The World's Greatest Lover—(1977), Gene Wilder's slapstick comedy—which he both wrote and directed—about movie-mad Rudy Hickman who journeys to 1926 Hollywood during a talent search for a rival to the great Valentino. Starring Gene Wilder, Carol Kane, and Dom DeLuise.

Zorba The Greek—(1964), zesty, flavorful, brooding story of a Greek wanderer and his British companion. Many critics have found Zorba one of the most colorful and memorable characters in modern fiction and film. Starring Anthony Quinn, Alan Bates, Irene Papas, Lila Kedrova, and George Foundas. Directed by Michael Cacoyannis.

The Man With The Golden Arm—(1955), Nelson Algren's compelling and classic study of a man suffering from drug addiction and his relationship with his crippled wife, brought to the screen by Otto Preminger. Starring Frank Sinatra, Eleanor Parker, Kim Novak, Darren McGavin, and Arnold Stang.

MCA DISTRIBUTING CORPORATION (laser/optical disc)
(70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City Studios, Universal City, CA 91608)

Xanadu—(1980), musical fantasy extravaganza featuring Olivia Newton-John and Gene Kelly. Directed by Robert Greenwald.

First National Kids' Disc—(1981), a disc made specifically for the home video market teaches kids about rope tying, the flags of the nations, origami (paper folding), and pig latin among other things. Runs 27 minutes, but longer if the kids use the machine's special effects—which is the intent of the producers.

CBS VIDEO ENTERPRISES (tape)

(51 West 52nd Street, New York, NY 10019)

Marvin Hamlisch: They're Playing My Song—(1981), musical hour featuring the songs of Marvin Hamlisch performed by Gladys Knight, Priscilla Lopez, Johnny Mathis, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and, of course, Hamlisch himself.

One Night Stand: An Evening Of All-Stars—(1981), jazz greats Eubie Blake, Herbie Hancock, Hubert Laws, Ron Carter, Bob James, Buddy Williams, Stanley Clark, George Duke, Kenny Barron, Arthur Blythe, Rodney Franklin, Sir Roland Hanna, Bobby Hutcherson, and Charles Earland are featured in concert.

COLUMBIA PICTURES HOME ENTERTAINMENT (laser disc)

(711 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10022)

Close Encounters of the 3rd Kind —Special Edition—(1980), the updated edition of the 1977 theater hit which includes several minutes of footage of human encounters with extraterrestrials not included in the original version. Starring Richard Dreyfuss, Francois Truffaut, Teri Garr, Melinda Dillon, Cary Guffey, and Bob Balaban. Directed by Steven Spielberg.

The China Syndrome—(1979), Jane Fonda, Jack Lemmon, and Michael Douglas uncover a Three-Mile Island type of nuclear accident. Directed by James Bridges.

Chapter Two—(1979), Neil Simon's autobiographical comedy involving a writer who is drawn into a new love affair before he has recovered from the death of his wife. Starring James Caan, Marsha Mason, Valerie Harper, Joseph Bologna. Directed by Robert Moore.

California Suite—(1978), four Neil Simon skits centered around the comings and goings at the posh Beverly Hills Hilton hotel. With Jane Fonda, Alan Alda, Maggie Smith, Michael Caine, Walter Matthau,

Elaine May, Richard Pryor, and Bill Cosby. Directed by Herbert Ross.

Midnight Express—(1978), violent story of a young American in a Turkish prison for a drug offense. With Brad Davis, Irene Miracle, Bo Hopkins, Randy Quaid, John Hurt, Mike Kellin, and Paul Smith. Directed by Alan Parker.

The Deep—(1977), based on the Peter Benchley novel about a young couple who inadvertently become involved in the dangers of treasure hunting and drug smuggling in Bermuda. With Robert Shaw, Jacqueline Bisset, Nick Nolte, Louis Gosset, Eli Wallach, and Robert Tessier. Directed by Peter Yates.

Z—(1969), highly-acclaimed movie about the Greek military takeover almost two decades ago. Starring Yves Montand and Irene Papas, along with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Charles Denner, Georges Géret, Jacques Perrin, and Francois Perier. Directed by Costa-Gavras.

Gimme Shelter—(1970), the disastrous and infamous 1969 Altamont Concert which featured the Rolling Stones, the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and a gruesome murder caught by the camera. Directed by David Maysles.

The Man Who Fell To Earth—(1977), David Bowie stars as a troubled alien in this interesting cult movie. Also with Buck Henry and Rip Torn. Directed by Nicholas Roeg.

COLUMBIA PICTURES HOME ENTERTAINMENT (tape)

The Guns of Navarone—(1961), Allied commandos carry out massive destruction of important German armaments. Starring Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Baker, James Darren, and Richard Harris. Directed by J. Lee Thompson.

The Bridge On The River Kwai—(1957), British prisoners of war build and plot to destroy a bridge with military importance to the Japanese. With William Holden, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, Sessue Hayakawa, Geoffrey Horne, and James Donald. Directed by David Lean.

Cat Ballou—(1965), Western comedy about a female outlaw and a drunken gunman starring Jane Fonda, Lee Marvin, Michael Callan, Dwayne Hickman, Reginald Denny, and Jay C. Flippen. Directed by Elliott Silverstein.

The Sorrow And The Pity—(1972), award-winning documentary concerning France's activities during World War II. Directed by Marcel Ophuls.

TIME-LIFE VIDEO (tape) (Harrisburg, PA 17105)

Blondie/The Cars—(1981), a double bill with two of rock's most popular groups. Blondie's Deborah Harry sings, "In The Sun," "Ex-Offender," "Kung-Fu Girl," "Picture This," and more. The Cars offer "My Best Friend's Girl," "Candy-O," "You're All I've Got Tonight," and others.

Suspicion—(1941), Alfred Hitchcock's suspenseful tale of a wife who thinks her embezzler-husband is trying to kill her. Starring Cary Grant, Joan Fontaine, Cedric Hardwicke, Nigel Bruce, and Dame May Whitty.

The Private Eyes—(1980), comedy about Inspector Winship and Doctor Tart and their bumbling misadventures in search of the murderer of Lord and Lady Morley. Starring Tim Conway, Don Knotts, and Trisha Noble. Directed by Lang Elliott.

Providence—(1977), as a dying writer attempts to complete his last novel, his thoughts about his family and his past intrude on and influence his work. Stars Dirk Bogarde, John Gielgud, Ellen Burstyn, David Warner, and Elaine Stritch. Directed by Alain Resnais in his English-language debut.

The Fall of the Roman Empire—(1964), star-studded epic about Rome in the Second Century A.D. as barbarians from the north invade the decadent empire. Starring Sophia Loren, Stephen Boyd, James Mason, Alec Guinness, Christopher Plummer, Anthony Quayle, Omar Sharif, and Mel Ferrer. Directed by Anthony Mann.

Loving Couples—(1979), two previously monogamous couples discover switching mates is best, at least for a while. Starring Shirley MacLaine, James Coburn, Susan Sarandon, Stephen Collins, and Sally Kellerman. Directed by Jack Smight.

George Carlin—(1978), the comedian at his best with some of his schticks about the dumb rules of childhood, the daily news, truth in names and words, and, of course, the seven words you can't say on commercial television.

**VISUAL CONCEPTS, INC./
HOME THEATRE (tape)**
(6464 Sunset Blvd., Suite 900,
Hollywood, CA 90028)

Make-up For Women—(1980), Hollywood make-up artist Barry Koper presents an informative "how-to" for the budding cosmetologist.

**Tom T. Hall Live In Concert:
Country Loves Bluegrass**—(1980), the famous country and western singer stars in an outdoor concert recorded last November, featuring down-home country and bluegrass music.

Ray Price In Concert—(1980), Ray Price sings many of his most famous songs, including "Spanish Eyes," "Make The World Go Away," "Heartaches By The Number," "Release Me."

(on 1/4-inch tape; Technicolor 212 format):

The Eruption of Mount St. Helens—(1980), a visual record of the events of March 27, 1980, when Mount St. Helens exploded with the devastating force equal to a 10-megaton bomb. Filmed and partially narrated by a cameraman trapped at the scene.

Racquel—Racquel Welch in a musical extravaganza.

Ann-Margaret—stars in her own 30-minute musical special.

London Bridge with Tom Jones—one for the ladies as Tom Jones sings his way through 30-minutes of some of his popular recordings.

Lou Rawls—appears with Duke Ellington in a musical special.

Fundamentals of Tennis—How to improve your swing, delivery, and over-all game.

**RCA SELECTAVISION
(capacitance disc)**
(30 Rockefeller Center, New York,
NY 10019)

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid—(1969), Paul Newman and Robert Redford in this highly-fictionalized account of the famous outlaws pursued by a distant posse in this seriocomic Western. With Katherine Ross, Strother Martin, Henry Jones, Jeff Corey, George Furth, Cloris Leachman. Directed by George Roy Hill.

The Dirty Dozen—(1967), 12 criminals are sprung from prison
(Continued on page 75)

NEW VIDEODISC ON THE BLOCK

RCA's Herb Schlosser discusses the new SelectaVision videodisc player—and why he believes his system is the best on the market.

By Steve Mitchell

RCA is well-known for making good television sets and good video cassette recorders. Among people in the industry, RCA is even better known for its marketing know-how—after all, CBS beat RCA to the color television market years before RCA's non-compatible system was successfully launched, and Sony beat RCA to the VCR gate with its Betamax, yet the RCA VHS machine now dominates the field.

Two years ago, Magnavox, Pioneer, and IBM combined forces with Universal Pictures to test-market an optical "laser" videodisc player that is a videophile's delight. This spring, RCA has launched its non-compatible capacitance ("grooved") videodisc player, and they put Herb Schlosser in charge of getting the programming together.

Schlosser is no stranger to the halls of Nipper. Having first joined RCA in 1957 as an attorney for its NBC Films division, he rapidly moved up through the ranks, eventually becoming president of their NBC television network in 1974.

Now an executive vice-president of RCA, Schlosser's appointment as SelectaVision programming chief was seen by the cynics as a "kick upstairs" after a less-than-number one performance at the helm of the Peacock Network. But after getting a look at his videodisc catalog and his programming strategy, even the cynics are silent.

VIDEO ACTION's New York correspondent Steve Mitchell interviewed Herb Schlosser earlier this year at his Rockefeller Plaza offices.



VIDEO ACTION: What kind of experience have you brought from NBC over to SelectaVision?

SCHLOSSER: I spent a great deal of my career involved in the programming area and prior to that in the negotiating area. Each position involved the putting together of elements that make a series or a special or a mini-series or a motion picture acquisition.

What we all faced here in launching the SelectaVision videodisc system is what has often been referred to as the chicken-or-egg situation. It became very clear to me that it was not chicken or egg, it's chicken and egg. You need to have the programming and the player ready at the same time. And RCA did not have an adequate catalog of programs to launch the system and programs to continue to release thereafter. So we had to build the organization that would accomplish that and acquire the programs that would permit us to continue to release and market the discs. The organization that I head up is charged with those functions.

VA: How do you go about selecting programming for the SelectaVision videodisc system?

SCHLOSSER: We have a program staff, and a program negotiating staff. We initially planned to have several different categories of programming. Our own research and program judgment, as well as the clear evidence of video cassette sales convinced us motion pictures would be the locomotive that would start the videodisc business. So we immediately decided to seek agreements to get the best features available, both classic and new.

And we have other categories of programs as well—children's programs, music, "how-to," sports, ballet, Shakespeare, some of the best television programs, and so forth. And we feel very strongly that down the road new productions will occur, because new successful feature films will not be released in sufficient quantity to play as important a role as they did in the beginning.

VA: How many titles will be in your catalog?

SCHLOSSER: The opening catalog will have 100 titles, and then we will offer our distributors 25 additional titles in May and 25 more in August. So we'll be building up to

150 in the course of the first six months.

VA: Which television programs do you plan on releasing?

SCHLOSSER: We have licensed such things as *Jesus of Nazareth*, *Victory at Sea*, *Holocaust*, some of the great Project 20 specials, *Star Trek*, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, *Clarence Darrow* with Henry Fonda, and many more. We are even licensing some episodes of classic television series. We are going to have four episodes of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* on one disc, the first episode, the last episode, and two other Emmy-winning programs.

We have acquired rights to four episodes of *Saturday Night Live* and have an option for more. The two-hour opening episode of *Little House on the Prairie* will be on a disc and we have a disc of the last two episodes of *The Fugitive* which got a tremendous rating years ago. We expect consumers will be interested enough in some of the things that have been on television that they would not otherwise be able to see again easily.

VA: I'm sure you're aware that to compete with prerecorded video cassettes, which largely feature motion pictures, you have to have something else to offer the audience.

SCHLOSSER: We do, but the competition with prerecorded cassettes is not only in content, but in price as well. The prerecorded cassette market has retail pricing at \$50 to \$80 per title. We will be offering disc programs at less than half that price. We are going after a much broader market than the one they're after.

VA: But don't you think that they might start to try and get competitive because you'll be stealing a piece of their pie?

SCHLOSSER: They might try to get competitive, to use your words, but we feel that the whole idea of the videodisc business is that we're producing a product that is going to be lower in price.

VA: And higher in quality.

SCHLOSSER: And higher in quality. Remember that the video tape system has been on the market for several years, and video tape in general is not a new technology. To

borrow the expression of the engineers, it's pretty far on the learning curve. The videodisc is not yet anywhere near where tape is on the learning curve. But with volume production, with improvements in technology, I am told by our engineers and executives that there is a good deal of cost that can be taken out of both the player and disc.

It's inherently a cheaper system. The player has less parts than the video tape player. It's a simpler device, at least under the RCA system. And the disc itself should be lower-cost.

VA: Talking about quality, your press releases indicated you have made deals with foreign film distributors for classic and current films. I have seen a demonstration of a couple of films in your initial catalog and I thought the quality was very nice, and it was obvious that you took them from 35mm original film material. What about some of the older classic titles: will you have the same kind of high-grade film material to make the discs from?

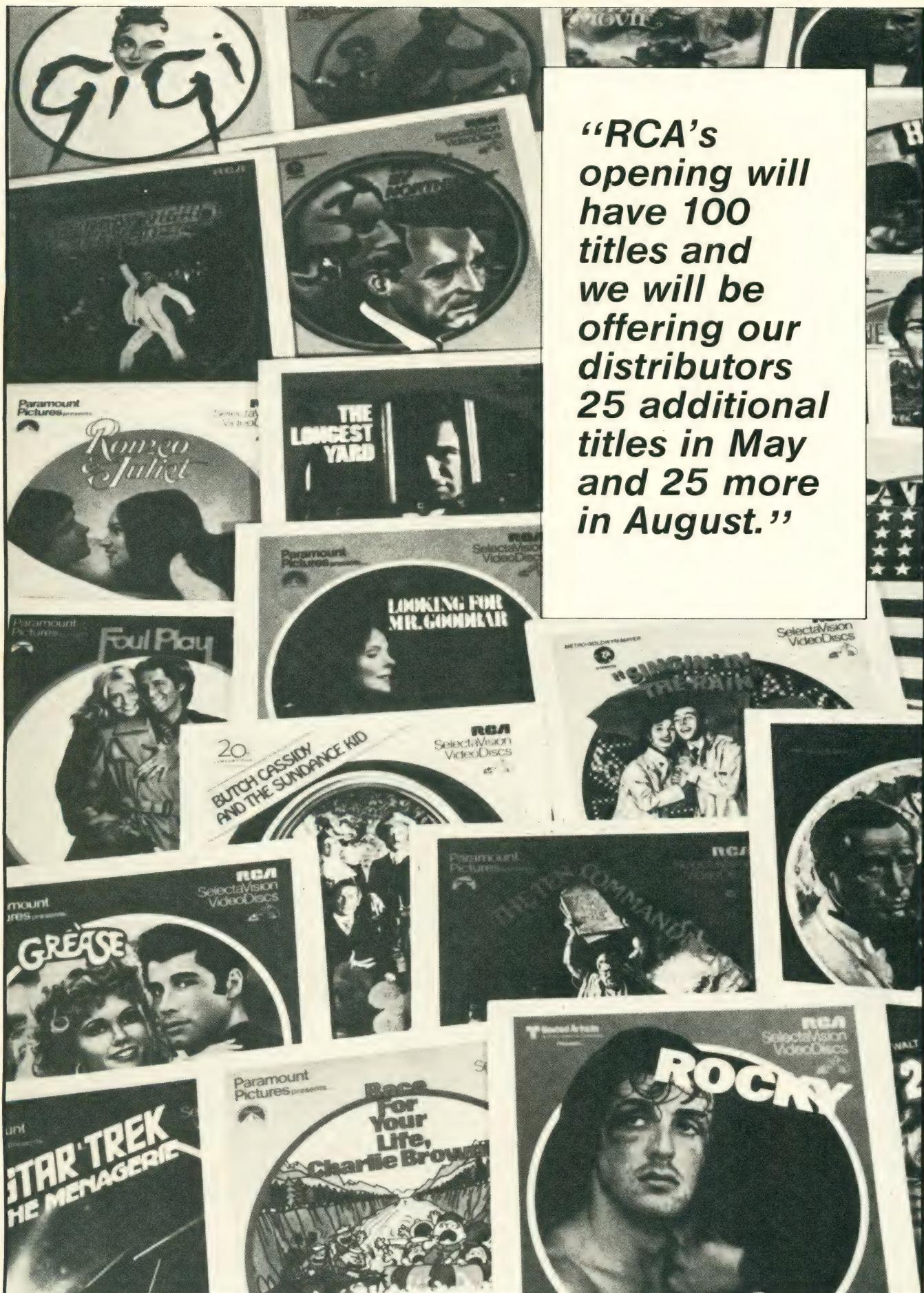
SCHLOSSER: We strive to get the very highest quality possible, which may mean going back to the very earliest materials there are—tape or film. Very often we reject the prints that are supplied to us. We believe the quality that we are getting is about as high as exists in the entertainment industry—higher than what is obtained in network television. The quality you are going to get on the disc is never going to be any higher than what you start with.

Now, in some of these older films it means going back as far as you can to the negative, it means using various electronic and other techniques to enhance the quality of what we have. But where the quality won't be as high as we'd like, given the nature of the materials available, we will put on the album label some legend to indicate that we got the best reproduction we could.

VA: What kind of non-cassette programming will you be releasing that is exclusive to videodisc?

SCHLOSSER: I think the great bulk of what we will put out will be available in both formats—video cassette and videodisc—but we view this as a somewhat different business than the video cassette in

"RCA's opening will have 100 titles and we will be offering our distributors 25 additional titles in May and 25 more in August."



that it's only a playback device, and is aimed at a broader audience—a much broader market than the one for video cassettes.

We're positioning this as a video record player aimed at the same market that buys color television sets. Our research indicates video cassette buyers are more likely to be male and affluent. The videodisc is much more evenly balanced, almost 50-50 male-female in appeal, much more family-oriented. Jack Sauter, who is the head of consumer electronics at RCA, views potential videodisc buyers as the great mass that owns color television sets.

VA: That's a lot of folks.

SCHLOSSER: Well, we're not saying every one of them will buy one. What we are saying is that we do not view the market as just a videophile upscale, more well-to-do, be-first-on-the-block buyer. We're looking for a bigger market than that.

With a player that retails for under

\$500, and discs generally priced at around \$15 to \$25, we expect to have a broader market than video cassettes. But we will co-exist.

VA: Okay. People who tend to buy the upscale VCRs, models that have a lot of the gizmos, fast search and slow motion and things like that—one would presume that same audience would probably be more interested in the optical videodisc system because of the special effects and features it offers. And I'm also told that in some areas, laser disc machines can be bought for approximately \$600 in many outlets. How do you feel about the fact that people who have the VCRs will probably be attracted to the more involved, more complex videodisc system? How do you plan to compete with that?

SCHLOSSER: Well, as I've indicated, we're going for a broader market. Secondly, on the more involved, complex laser systems we think that too much complexity is a disadvantage in going after a broad

mass market. And most of these features do not operate on programming that has an hour per side on it. As they move toward the hour per side, which is the preferred way to sell virtually everything they're offering, they give up many features on their player. And almost all they are offering is movies. They are trying hard to get away from the half hour per side to get to the longer play disc.

Bear in mind that most of the color television sets in the United States today are mechanically operated. They work for years with a minimum of servicing. The United States is turning out very good sets today, the Japanese are turning out good sets. What we're aiming at is a lower-priced, easy to operate, easy to service, easy to maintain videodisc player with an hour per side. We will have step-up models: we did not introduce the video cassette player with all the features it now has. And RCA really does get credit for launching the video cassette market in this country. We have the biggest market share. We're not sure the best way to launch the videodisc is by trying to sell everybody a Cadillac player.

VA: You want to sell them a Chevrolet instead.

SCHLOSSER: We would like to sell a player that the average consumer can afford, one that works well, and stands up well.

VA: You've discussed how easy your disc system is to service. Do you think that the machines are going to break down with some frequency?

SCHLOSSER: RCA's reputation will stand behind the product. We will make a good product. Anything that you buy—television set, video tape player, whatever—may need service at some time. You have to have a service operation that stands by ready to repair anything that does not work. RCA will have 1000 licensed service centers ready on the day of launch.

VA: With people who know how to take the machines apart and put them back together again?

SCHLOSSER: Whatever. And that's apparently been something of a problem with the other system, but RCA has excellent service capabilities throughout the United States with television sets and with

"The videodisc's competition with prerecorded cassettes is not only in content but in price as well—cassettes cost from \$50 to \$80 and we will be offering discs for less than half that."

FIRST "CED" VIDEODISCS—
The first videodiscs manufactured for RCA's "CED" system move down a conveyor at the company's Rockville Road plant in Indianapolis. Production began in July in advance of the national introduction of the RCA videodisc system in the first quarter of 1981.
"Race for Your Life, Charlie Brown" is the first videodisc album manufactured by RCA.



its video cassette players. It will bring that same advantage to its marketing of the videodisc player.

VA: Are the RCA service technicians being trained as we speak?

SCHLOSSER: They're being trained right now.

VA: MCA is a big organization, and one of its subsidiary organizations is Universal Pictures, which is supplying the optical disc system with a fairly large catalog of titles. It's a studio that's been around for a long time, and it has an immense library of motion pictures, and an even bigger library of television shows. And that, as I understand, is an exclusive deal. Do you have any similar exclusive deals with any of your programming suppliers?

SCHLOSSER: Well, first of all, your question raises several points. First, as to exclusivity, I believe that the features in the Universal library *will* be made available to all systems. The producers of those pictures would want them made available to the alternate system. Also, when you speak about immense libraries it can be misleading.

VA: How so?

SCHLOSSER: I'll tell you how. We have analyzed the feature film libraries of all the major studios. Say a studio owns a thousand, two thousand titles. When we go through these libraries we know we will find 75, maybe even 125 titles that we would be interested in licensing. We do not believe that all the motion pictures and all the television programs that have ever been made will sell on videodisc. This is a product you've got to buy, the way you buy a record or a book. Our research indicates—and again, our judgment concurs—that the best of them will be what the consumer will be interested in—the classics. And our research bears this out.

How recent a film is is less important than the quality of the film, its box office at the time it was released, the stars that were in it. And that's why people watch *Casablanca* over and over again. I can give many examples. The only point I'm making is that out of the immense libraries it is not the number of films that counts, it's the quality of the films.

We have had access to the

Paramount library, and the United Artists' library. The United Artists' library not only has the great films released over the last 20 years but also the older Warner Brothers classics. We have some of the Fox films, some of the MGM films, Disney films, and films from many smaller companies. But I do not believe there will be thousands and thousands of these old films that we will want to release on the videodisc.

That's why new production will become very important. Hollywood can give you—what?—20 to 25 top films a year. That's pretty good. But it's not enough to sustain this business, and we're going to need other things. Over the next several years new production will start, and in the mid-80s and the last half of this decade, new production will be very important.

VA: Universal's *Columbo* shows alone I think would make for an interesting addition to any catalog, because as you say, Hollywood, if they're having a good year, may only crank out 25 really good films that the public would be interested in. Now, personally speaking, I have seen 99% of the *Columbo* episodes that had been aired, they were terrific and I wouldn't mind owning them and that's only one of many excellent series Universal has at its disposal for the optical system. Are you going to try to look into the possibility of making a deal with them for some of their television product in the future?

SCHLOSSER: Yes, and *Columbo* is a good example. That first episode of *Columbo* called "Prescription Murder" was produced when I was head of NBC Programming on the West Coast. I was intimately involved with the *NBC Mystery Movie* series of which *Columbo* was a part. Initially, Peter Falk didn't want to do it. I lived with that series so I know just about every episode. So in answer to your question: sure we would like to get some episodes of *Columbo*. I do not think we'll get them soon, but at some point it's going to become available to the home media—I think it will be in Universal's interest and in ours to get them on our system.

VA: Are you worried about piracy? Some people might desire to have a VCR next to a disc system to tape off the disc. Five or six people can get together and buy one disc—it might cost them three dollars apiece to

"How recent a film is, is less important than its quality or stars. That's why people watch *CASABLANCA* over and over again."

buy the one disc—and then they can go out and run off dubs on blank cassettes and still have a first-run movie of top-rate quality for a lot less than prerecorded cassettes. Are you worried about that sort of thing?

SCHLOSSER: We, and most of the major studio people we've talked to, are far less worried about piracy in the videodisc medium than in the cassette medium. The price to the consumer of the videodisc with our system is about \$15 to \$25. It is so much less than prerecorded cassettes and really in the ball park of what blank tape costs the consumer. I'm not sure it would be worth it to go to all the trouble to make cassette copies of the disc if you can buy the disc at the prices I've indicated. As far as making duplicate discs themselves, the disc is a high technology product. You can't make them in your garage.

VA: Okay, but we're talking initially here.

SCHLOSSER: I can't say that it won't happen eventually. Has it happened on the optical system? That's been out for two years. I mean, I'm sure it's possible, but for somebody really interested in pre-

recorded programming—if that's what he really wants—it would be cheaper to go out and buy the discs without going through all the trouble of copying the disc onto tape and getting inferior quality to boot, because you wouldn't be getting first generation.

"It was our judgement that we should start out with a low cost mono disc player that would appeal to the vast television set market. Stereo will come later."

VA: You're quoted as saying RCA will sell about 200,000 players and 2,000,000 discs the first year. How did you arrive at those figures?

SCHLOSSER: That's the production that we will be turning out in Indianapolis and Bloomington and that's what we expect to sell.

VA: Your videodisc system, as it exists right now, is a mono system.

SCHLOSSER: Yes.

VA: Why didn't you create a machine with stereo capabilities?

SCHLOSSER: For several reasons. There are about 150,000,000 television sets in the United States and they are all mono. Most people have their stereo in some position that is not next to the television set. For a stereo player to make sense, you would have to have your speakers next to the set to get the sound coming from the same source as the picture. It was our judgment that we should start out with a low price player that would appeal to the vast television set market, and come out later with

stereo systems. They would be higher priced, to be sure, for those who wished to buy them.

We will not just have a stereo player. We will offer both a stereo and a mono player. We believe that virtually everybody will play discs through their mono television set. We do believe there will be stereo television sets in the future, and that will be an important boost to the sales of stereo players. The video tape players on the market now are mono, and there are two million of them out there. We wanted to start with the player we felt could best launch this business at the lowest price.

VA: When you finally release your stereo system will you have licensed the rights to produce discs of films with stereo soundtracks?

SCHLOSSER: That's a good question. You've got a player on the market now for almost two years that has stereo capability, and very little stereo software to go with it. We plan to have stereo software to launch with our player. The whole area of music video will become very, very important.

But it would be wrong to let people think that under our system and under the other system it will be important in the beginning. There have not been the union agreements in place to make the production of music video possible. Those agreements are now being negotiated. Also the music rights agreements with the publishers have not been worked out.

The videodisc medium will not start with everything in place from the first day. Television did not start that way. Television borrowed from radio, Broadway, vaudeville, and from motion pictures. Then it started to create its own thing. It created *The Today Show*, *The Tonight Show*, and *Saturday Night Live*, 60 Minutes, a new kind of news coverage, sports coverage, and so on. The same is true with the videodisc. We are borrowing heavily from movies, and then the videodisc medium will start to develop its own things. One of the most important areas that will develop—and will be different than in any other medium—will be the music videodisc. You will see the creation of music videodiscs that will run 90 minutes to two hours. They will not all be just recorded concerts, although we do plan to have them. It's going to be

something totally different. It won't spring forth fully grown in one day. Give us a chance to get some players out there and evolve. And then it will happen.

VA: Four years ago RCA came out with a video cassette recorder and called it SelectaVision. Now RCA is bringing out a videodisc player, which is a totally different piece of hardware, and you're still calling it SelectaVision. Why is that?

SCHLOSSER: Well, Jack Sauter, who is, in my judgment, as fine a marketing man as there is in this country feels the SelectaVision name has real value. It identifies another product—RCA's VCR. The VCR and videodisc are part of a new era, which Jack Sauter calls "personal television." Interestingly enough, the word "SelectaVision" was initially adopted for RCA's videodisc system and the first videodiscs that were made had a "SelectaVision" logo on them. When we then went into the VCR business we took the name that was to be used for videodisc and moved it over to VCR and now it's back. But the products will be clearly differentiated. "SelectaVision" has a great deal of advertising and promotional support behind it. Videodisc is another product that will be able to use it, and RCA believes there is a value in using this highly promoted name.

VA: RCA's videodisc system will cost \$499.95. We understand that the optical disc system can be purchased at a discount for about \$600 and as we both know, that includes stereo and all the special effects that the SelectaVision system lacks. Do you think any of your customers will be able to purchase your videodisc system for less than the retail price?

SCHLOSSER: Well, I think you have to talk about that within a specific time frame.

VA: Within the first six months.

SCHLOSSER: The optical player has been on the market for over two years, and you never can tell what a retailer will or will not do. Discounting is usually a function of whether or not a retailer can move the product. We're not even on the market yet, and we haven't even begun to cut all the costs out of it that we feel we can. So it's pointless to talk to us about

what they're discounting optical players for. And it would not make sense for me to suggest discounting or anything like it. We have a suggested retail price. A retailer is free to sell it at whatever he wants to. But ours is certainly a less costly product to manufacture.

VA: We've made some surveys in the optical disc test areas and video stores which tell us the optical videodisc player is selling so fast that they're having problems keeping it in stock.

SCHLOSSER: Great.

VA: Now that the optical system has gone mass market and appears to be selling like hot cakes, are you worried that their system may become dominant in the marketplace since they have the jump on you?

SCHLOSSER: No.

VA: Why?

SCHLOSSER: Because we feel that we have the advantage with our lower priced player. We start out with discs that are one hour per side. We have a large software catalog. As you may have read, we've just announced a deal for the James Bond films. We have the superb RCA manufacturing and distribution apparatus. We have the very strongest allies in Zenith, Hitachi, Sanyo, Toshiba, Sears Roebuck, J.C. Penney, and Radio Shack. And, of course, on the disc-making side we're well along. I believe we'll make more discs by far in 1981 than anyone in the world. And CBS is putting its plant together so it can join us in 1982.

VA: You mentioned the acquisition of the Bond films. What other major motion pictures do you have under license?

SCHLOSSER: Pictures like *Rocky* and *Fiddler on the Roof* and the *Pink Panther* films, *Woody Allen* films. We have *Casablanca*, *Maltese Falcon*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Robin Hood*. As you know, we just acquired from Paramount *Ordinary People* and *Airplane* and *Elephant Man* and *Urban Cowboy*. The first James Bond we're releasing is *Goldfinger*.

VA: It's one of the more popular titles, to be sure. Which segues into a question I must ask you. Why do you think people are going to buy a videodisc system when they can probably see their favorite film on

cable two or three times and just tape the film if they want to. The Bond films are a perfect example.

SCHLOSSER: First of all, most people do not have video cassette players. The penetration of pay cable is about five to six million homes. Cable itself is not available all over the country. Thirdly, the emerging pattern for home video is that motion pictures will show up in home video before these films get to pay cable. So the viewer will have an opportunity to buy them at an earlier point and play them when he wishes to, on his own time. Pay cable cannot call up what you would like to see when you want to see it. Most of the great films of the past are locked out of pay cable for quite some time to come.

VA: Because they're locked up in syndication.

SCHLOSSER: Correct. It's only in the last few years that the studios have been keeping their films to go on pay cable first, then network, then syndication. But already existing syndication agreements with hundreds of stations keep most of the great films of the past off of pay cable. Most of the classics that you might want to see can only be seen late at night on a local station full of commercials.

VA: You're really trying to get a hold of that family that does have a color television set but none of the other kinds of video hardware.

SCHLOSSER: That is right. Most of the television sets in people's homes today work very well. They work year after year. They do not have remote control. You have to get up to change the channel manually without remote control. And we are seeking to get our player into the same market place—that mass marketplace that serves the average color set buyer.

VA: Our assistant editor in Chicago got a demonstration of your system last fall and the fellow that gave the demonstration said that a SelectaVision videodisc owner can get as many as 300 plays off a disc without any significant wear on the disc. Our editors in Chicago have talked with some electronics experts and they say that SelectaVision will only get 20 to 30 plays before the disc will start to wear down. What's the story?

SCHLOSSER: We have been

getting hundreds of plays without degradation. We do not feel the number of plays really is an issue now, and it seems to have vanished as an issue.

Even if you are crazy about *Casablanca*, would you watch it from 100 to 200 times?

VA: Well, you're certainly not going to do it 100 or 200 days in a row.

SCHLOSSER: Also, the other Japanese system, the JVC system, uses a stylus that rides on top of the disc. We just don't think the question of wear is a real issue.

VA: I was told and shown that your diamond stylus is easy to replace and at a very reasonable cost. What are the projections for stylus life on your system?

SCHLOSSER: It is designed to last for years under normal use . . . hundreds of hours and up.

VA: Going up? Why is that?

SCHLOSSER: They're continuing to improve it as they will continue to improve all parts of the system. After color television was introduced—and after VCRs were introduced there continued to be refinements and improvements. You continue to take out cost. You continue to have new models and so forth.

VA: One last question. Are you worried about the economy having an effect on the sales of the machine?

SCHLOSSER: Not really. You know we are not in a depression and most economists do not predict one. RCA is not launching this new product for one quarter or one half a year. The big push will be on for years. So the answer to your question is no.

As a matter of fact, the year that just ended—1980—was not a particularly good year for the economy as a whole. It was a recessionary year, and yet it was a very good year for television sets and a boom year for VCRs. I think that we are seeing the beginning of a decade where home video, home entertainment may be much more important than ever. And when recessionary years do come, there may be even more of a demand for home entertainment. There may be less use of the automobile, perhaps people will not go out to the movies quite as much. So I wouldn't base any judgments on what the economy happens to be today or tomorrow.

PLAY BY PLAY

(Continued from page 47)

them in competition. The only "Olympics" that contains the Olympic spirit as originally envisioned.

Sports: The Programmed Gladiators

Sociology, 18 min., Document Associates

A film that takes on the hard facts behind the dream of sports: commercialization, drug abuse among athletes, and the increasing intrusion of television. Something to yell at.

Stampee Wrestling

Wrestling, 60 min., TV Sports Scene

This is probably a frolicsome look at the world of professional wrestling: the blurb said no-holds-barred, six men in the ring at once. A series of 52 programs that could be called the "New New Zoo Revue."

Super Bowl I-XIV

Football, 30 min. (each), NFL Films

They are all here from the 1967

Green Bay-Kansas City match-up to last year's Steelers-Rams contest. Most of the Super Bowl games were not as exciting as everyone thought they should be, but a half-hour of highlights from any of the games should be fairly entertaining.

Tae Kwon Do, Korean Art of Self-Defense

Martial arts, 29 min., Michigan Media

Maybe this isn't as exciting as Bruce Lee, but it gives a nice historical perspective on this technique as well as practical demonstrations.

U.S. Open 1975-1976

Tennis, 26 min., Sports World Cinema

Two individually available programs that capture the Forest Hills and volleys of these two tournaments. Manuel Orantes and Guillermo Vilas are featured in 1975 tape; Borg, Nastase, Connors, Goolagond, and Evert are in the 1976 program.

Visions of Eight

Olympics, 110 min., Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment

Eight international film directors contributed their own view to the montage of athletes and events of the 1972 Munich Summer Games.

Women in Sports

Women's sports, 58 min., Pyramid Films

James Michener narrates this history of women in sports. The state-of-the-art is a topic discussed with such notables as Chris Evert Lloyd, Janet Guthrie, and Nancy Lopez.

Women's USSR Gymnastics Tour

Gymnastics, 24 min., Champions on Film

Here is where Olga Korbut, Nelli Kim, Lydia Gorbik, and veteran Ludmilla Tourischeva get their chance to amaze us. Four individually available films.

World Series, 1945-1979

Baseball, Major League Baseball Productions

Baseball heaven. Over three decades of legendary baseball action. Let your fanaticism be your guide. ■

next month in *VIDEO ACTION*

NEW RELEASES

NEW PRODUCTS

NEWSLINE

REVIEWS

HOME COMPUTERS

VIDEO ACTION EXPRESS

TAPE VS. DISC: MCA TAKES ON MCA

GETTING RIPPED OFF AT THE VIDEO STORE

AN OVERVIEW OF SCIENCE-FICTION VIDEO

CABLE TELEVISION CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE!

—and—

An Interview With Projection TV Pioneer Henry Kloss

Take control of your television

Video discs. Video cassettes. Cable television. Pay T.V. Home computers. Over-the-air information. Video games. Direct satellite-to-home reception.

Five years ago, nobody even considered having any of this in their homes. Today, people are clamoring to get in on the action. Tomorrow, the whole video field will have grown to the point where video technology will be the single most important aspect of our daily lives.

T.V. is more than just entertainment. Medical information, daily food cost comparisons, computer checking and bank transactions right to your television screen, newspapers over the air, updated constantly ... today's video world is a whole lot more than just major motion pictures.



The First Total Video Magazine

VIDEO ACTION is the first magazine that helps you take control of your television set. We will keep you abreast of all the latest in this, the fastest growing communications medium.

Written so you don't have to be a T.V. repairman or electronics genius to understand it, **VIDEO ACTION** covers every aspect of the field. We keep you on top of the latest in broadcast and cable television, in video discs, cassettes and games. We keep you informed of all the changes in the field—what's new, what's being replaced, what's changed ... and how all this will effect you, your family and your society.

VIDEO ACTION is the best possible guide for living in the video world.

VIDEO ACTION. Take control of your T.V.

home tapes made easy

The Technicolor 212 1/4-inch VCR might be just what we need—even if it is still another new format.



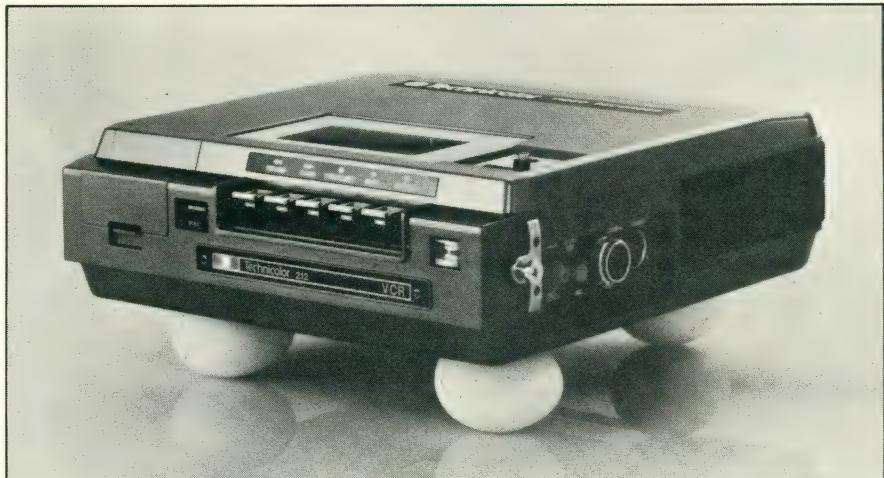
home tapes made easy

By Graham Carlton

THE MAIN PROBLEM with Technicolor's new seven pound portable video cassette recorder is one of image: people who already have tape decks in their living rooms do not see the point in spending another \$1,000 on a new toy the size of a cigar box. That's alright, this unit wasn't designed for them. Many independent producers do not see any reason to add another portable to their inventory if said portable only works with 30 minute tapes and batteries that only have 40 minute charges. That's alright, this unit wasn't designed for them either.

This unit was designed for people who love television but are fed up with what television is feeding us. This unit was designed for people who realize that a truly lightweight, portable VCR is the match that will light the fuse on the biggest cultural revolution to hit America since the introduction of television itself. Contrary to what Technicolor's advertising would have you believe, the people who will get the most use out of the Model 212 VCR are not

THE EVOLUTION OF VIDEO TAPE—In its 24-year history, video tape has expanded in usage as it became ever smaller and more compact. At the left is the two-inch reel, introduced to professional broadcasters in 1956 and still in use. One-inch tape was developed in 1964. Video tape in cassettes came into being in the early 70s in the 3/4-inch "U" format. In the mid-70s, half-inch tape made its debut, leading to the first "portables." Now, Technicolor has introduced quarter-inch video tape contained in the cassette in the foreground. It weighs less than two ounces, while the lightest half-inch cassette weighs more than half a pound. The new Technicolor video cassette recorder, including a self-contained battery, weighs only seven pounds.



executives who want to send "video memos" or proud papas who want to tape junior's little league performance—the people that the Technicolor 212 was designed for are those restless, creative souls who want to take home television out of the home and into the street.

Anybody seriously interested in doing any type of original production need only see the 212 to fall madly in love with it. While Technicolor's ads indicate that there might be something special going on here, the deck itself gives you all the confirmation you need. Let's run through the pros and cons.

Several colleagues certify the 212 with second class status because it uses 1/4-inch tape. With video tape, it's true that bigger is better but how practical is a two inch copy of *The Godfather*? We are talking about home video.

In order to form a reasonably objective opinion about the quality of 1/4-inch tape, we used it at random while shooting a few industrial jobs and also to document our long weekend in the woods. On the industrial jobs, most of the shooting was done primarily in 1/2-inch (Beta/VHS formats) with the final

GREAT ON EGGS!—Technicolor's new lightweight, portable video cassette recorder (7 lbs., including self-contained battery).

Miniaturization has been achieved through a unique Micro Helical System and 1/4-inch video tape. The Technicolor system is now being introduced for industrial, educational and consumer use.

Anyone seriously interested in doing original home productions on video tape need only see the Technicolor 212 VCR to fall madly in love with it.

product edited and mastered for presentation on $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch. All shooting was done with the same RCA CC-002 camera except for some special effects done in black and white.

It was hard to watch the final edit objectively knowing what footage was done with what recorder, but the people the presentation was done for and shown to were impressed with the overall excellence of the job. The consistency in picture quality was close enough that if you did not know you were supposed to watch for something different you would not see anything out of place.

The vacation tapes looked as good as anything we ever did on $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in the same situation. Summing up on picture quality, the 212 enables you to get a good enough picture to fill any need short of shooting for commercial release, but again, this is supposed to be *home* video. If you really want to get home video out of the home, editing up to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch produces a good enough picture to put on public access cable.

The gripe from this quarter about the unit simply is that the tapes should be longer. The only thing more frustrating than the scant half hour tape length is the tape's \$8.95 list price. That almost seems like Technicolor's way of telling you that this makes a great second deck as the price tends to inhibit building a library of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch tapes. On a dollar-per minute basis, a Beta or VHS tape is far less expensive.

This deck was designed for production. To tape off the air you have to get some roundabout optional connectors. Of course, there is no prerecorded material available yet although a deal is in the works with NFL Films and various producers of children's films.

As production seems to be the main function, it's an

understatement to say the control design is very functional. Whether sitting on a tabletop or hanging from your shoulder, the five easy touch controls that advance or rewind the tape are easy to get at and operate. In either position they



seem to be just staring you in the face, ready to go. The right side of the deck has all the other controls.

On the right side you will find the tracking knob which also functions as a speed controller when you put the machine in the still-frame mode. By flicking the tracking knob out of the fixed tracking position you can either freeze-frame or speed through the tape at up to 1.8 times normal speed. This feature could use some work as it is reminiscent of early Betascan—you get a picture with a lot of video noise. There is a handy audio dub control which is best put to use for adding narration, as opposed to music.

The camera input was specially designed for use with a compatible Technicolor color camera made by Hitachi which, unfortunately, was unavailable at the time of our testing. To compensate, Technicolor has an optional adapter that will help most cameras interface with the VCR. Unfortunately, the RCA CC-002 was not one of the cameras that interface perfectly and we were not able to use the camera's pause control or watch immediate

playback through the electric viewfinder. That was frustrating, as there is an earphone jack that lets you hear the sound as you playback through the viewfinder.

Rounding off the right side controls is the power jack. This is where you connect the box that serves as AC power source, battery recharger, and RF output. With an optional cord you can also plug into the cigarette lighter in your car. It takes about an hour to recharge the standard ni-cad battery. A nice feature is that the charger shuts off automatically when the battery is charged.

Included with the deck are a variety of cables, switch boxes, anvils, and baluns to hook the deck up to your television. For the sake of simplicity, we ran a cable from the charger's audio and video out terminals to our Sony 8200's audio and video input terminals and watched it pumped through the Sony as opposed to directly to the television.

With the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and Summer Consumer Electronics Show (CES) shows right around the corner, it might be a wise idea to let your interest in this fine piece of hardware smoulder for a while. There are promises of longer tapes, optional tuners and other goodies on the horizon. Since we are all well acquainted with the ravages of video obsolescence, you might be better off waiting to check out the new features and how they can further serve you, particularly if you have yet to take the video plunge.

As it stands right now, the Technicolor 212 portable video cassette recorder is damn handy when it comes to making home tapes—particularly out "on location." It is not—and is not intended to be—a replacement for the Beta or VHS format television time-displacement VCRs. If they could lick the 30 minute tape factor, they would have a real winner. ■

Prima Facie

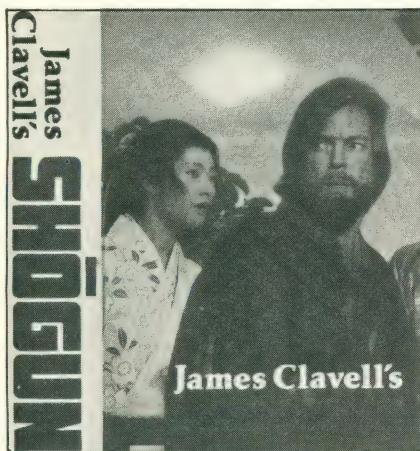
A FIRST VIEW OF WHAT'S NEW

VIDEO TAPES

SHOGUN. A Paramount Pictures release from Paramount Home Video. Produced and written by Eric Bercovici. Directed by Jerry London. Executive Producer, James Clavell. Based on the novel by James Clavell. Music composed and conducted by Maurice Jarre. Narration by Orson Welles. 124 minutes. \$79.95 retail.

Blackthorne . . . Richard Chamberlain
Toranaga Toshiro Mifune
Mariko Yoko Shimada

It was with great trepidation that I sat down to watch this video cassette. A couple years back I was absolutely



captivated by James Clavell's tome of the adventures of Blackthorne, the English navigator who becomes shipwrecked in a hostile samurai-dominated Japan and who, in turn, becomes a samurai himself for the great warlord Toranaga. When Paramount decided to produce a mini-series for television last year I was thrilled that not only would the series be 12 hours—thus giving the 1000-plus-page book room to breathe on film—but that the author himself was involved in its production.

I was not disappointed by the final product. The series did justice to the book and added to its majesty with exceptionally well acted sequences and lush photography.

In brief, for those few who did not view the series: Blackthorne is an English navigator on a Dutch privateer (in days of old, "legal" piracy was the order of the day; certain ships with the proper papers could loot the ships from enemy countries). Blackthorne's ship is wrecked in a storm. He and several surviving crew members experience a high degree of culture shock upon their arrival in Japan. As prisoners, they undergo great privations and watch one of their number being slowly boiled to death in oil. Blackthorne is later thrown into another prison, one whose inmates generally wind up crucified.

During this slow and torturous period of time Blackthorne begins to learn the ways of Japan, its politics, and its odd customs—like regular bathing. As events unfold, Blackthorne is sprung and becomes embroiled in the machinations of Lord Toranaga's ascent to Shogun—supreme military dictator of Japan whose power is even greater than the Emperor's.

Blackthorne's education is continued by the beautiful Mariko, a Christian convert who is also Toranaga's right hand. Blackthorne and Mariko become lovers, an offense punishable by death for both since Mariko is married. Mixed into the brew is the power of the Catholic Church and the Portuguese Jesuits and their opposition to the growing prominence of the British navigator.

To reiterate: the book was superb and the mini-series was equally good. Unfortunately this two-hour condensation is to the originals what a Harlequin romance is to *Wuthering Heights*.

About the only interesting aspect of this presentation is the use of several clips not used in the television series: a bit of nudity and a hint of gore (one particularly gruesome beheading comes to mind). The shifts between scenes are extremely abrupt and upset the overall continuity. Though many of the scenes expunged from the original were not absolutely

necessary to the plot, many which were necessary were chopped out of the home video version. What we are left with is a disjointed jumble of sequences which leaves us with questions about what is going on between the now motiveless characters.

The relationship between Blackthorne and the Portuguese navigator, Dell 'Aqua, for example, is missing. Why, one wonders watching the castrated version, are they friendly and not hostile since they represent enemy countries? The fact that they had each saved the other's life, as well as the bit where Dell 'Aqua at one point tried to kill Blackthorne, are completely missing.

In still another inexplicable scene we see Mariko attempting suicide. Why? In the mini-series we know she was clearing the dishonor she "inherited" from her traitorous father. In this version we are left in a quandary.

I could go on in this manner but I am sure you get the point. The original *Shogun*, both book and series, was an incredibly complex story with plots and subplots interwoven around intricate characterizations and relationships. This mini-version (which is also the theatrical version) totally trashes the beauty of the original. Avoid it like the plague.

—Alex Josephs

THE CROSS AND THE SWITCHBLADE. A Dick Ross and Associates release; video cassette from VCI Command Performance (6555 E. Skelly Drive, Tulsa Oklahoma 74145). Produced by Dick Ross. Directed by Don Murray. Screenplay: Murray and James Bonnet. Music: Ralph Carmichael. Running time: 105 minutes. \$64.95 retail.

David Wilkerson Pat Boone
Nicky Cruz Erik Estrada
Rosa Jackie Giroux
Little Bo Jo-Ann Robinson

There are only a few ways to produce a religious movie. You can preach by word, or you can preach by deed. You can dramatize historical

events, or you can create an original story. No matter how you tell your story, your biggest risk is in preaching to the already convinced—unbelievers need to be shown something.

There is a wealth of religious programming available to the convinced—one in every seven radio stations is Christian-owned-and-operated, one out of every three books sold is religious in nature.

These efforts appeal to the religious. Primarily, they are sold in religious bookstores or sections; the broadcast media have the unfortunate habit of blustering and overwhelming the unconvinced.

The past few years has seen the creation of a new communications medium—home video entertainment. Obviously, it was just a matter of time before the religious programmers made in-roads into this field. Quite frankly, I am surprised it took so long.

The Cross and the Switchblade is one of the—if not the—biggest and best-known Christian movies. It is a drama, loosely based upon the real-life (great phrase, that) experiences of New York preacher David Wilkerson, who built a congregation out of gang members, drug addicts, and prostitutes. As the title implies, this movie pits the Word against the Weapon. One thinks one is going to get a lot of blood and guts. One would not be totally disappointed.

For a religious motion picture—even one produced ten years before Jerry Falwell and Phyllis Schlafly decided they represent God in the matter of earthly censorship—*The Cross and the Switchblade* has a great deal of violence, and more than a bit of blood. Them street gangs really do mix it up, with knives and chains and baseball bats (the movie was shot in 1969—before the popularization of the handgun in gang disputes). The film has more than its share of such scenes.

That's not bad. Like I said, the trick is to attract the unconvinced, and the best way to turn off the heathens is to bore them to tears.

Not that this movie avoids stereotypes. The black gang members are very, very black. The non-black gang is Latino. There are hippie gangsters (1969, remember?), and a hippie crash pad is represented as the location of a gang headquarters. The old line about marijuana addiction is dredged out, and the heroin withdrawal scenes are overdramatized. Worse still, after the pretty girl does kick the habit, she looks like she is as together as Jackie O.

For a movie of this nature, it is remarkably well-made. It is fairly

entertaining to the non-believer, and, of course, the more Christian video cassette owner will consider it long overdue.

Part—if not most—of the movie's appeal rests in the fine performance of Pat Boone (if, indeed, Mr. Boone was acting. He certainly was responding to a higher motivation, and I mean this with the utmost respect) as the youthful Preacher, Mr. Wilkerson. I

THE CROSS AND THE SWITCHBLADE has more than a bit of blood, but that's not bad—the best way to turn off the heathens is to bore them to tears.

say youthful pointedly: Boone appears to be about 28, he was about 35 at the time *The Cross and the Switchblade* was filmed.

The rest of the cast turns in uninspired performances (the pun is necessary; I am actually being charitable). Erik Estrada, late of *Chips*, did not forget how to act when he signed with NBC.

The production values are not strong. Better than most independently released motion pictures, *The Cross and the Switchblade* makes decent use of its New York locations. Lighting and sound are adequate, although the sound is out of sync throughout the first fifteen minutes or so. The tape, on the other hand, was of superior quality: the VHS copy I reviewed was among the best I have ever seen.

If you are not interested in such religious programming, there is little in *The Cross and the Switchblade* to warrant repeated viewing. If you have been longing for such fare to feed your video cassette recorder, you would have a hard time finding something better.

—Mike Gold

HOW TO AVOID BEING CHEATED... AT CARDS. An American Home Video Productions Company release (P.O. Box 153, Vernon Hills, Illinois 60061). Produced by R.G. Kutok. Directed by Barry Aidlin. Hosted by Buddy Farnan, with Bonnie Berkley. Running time: 53 minutes. \$49.95 retail.

Before I discovered writing could be both fun and profitable, I had a simpler method for picking up a spare dollar or two. I would gather together a few of my most competitive friends, buy some beer, and settle down for a neighborly game of poker.

How well I remember those games. I remember the feel of those beer-spattered cards, the smell of taco chips rising from the table, the sound of cigarettes choking to death on my best china. I seem to recall the night's big winner usually was the person who could walk a straight line to the bathroom. I do not recall whether or not that person had to cheat to remain upright.

In fact, I never remember being the least bit concerned about cheating. Once in a while there would be a bit of petty thievery or the hapless destruction of some of my personal possessions. But cheating among poker buddies? The idea was beneath contempt, and my pals were certainly above reproach.

But what about those unknown quantities who the regulars would occasionally bring along to fill up an empty chair? The kind of loose game we played would be easy pickings for even the most amateur ratfink.

How To Avoid Being Cheated... At Cards sent a much-needed shiver of doubt up my spine. There are definitely people out there ready to cheat you out of a car payment or two, and they know a number of ingenious ways to do it. Buddy Farnan, the host of *How To Avoid Being Cheated...* At Cards, knows all the scams. He is a professional manipulator whose demonstrations of sleight-of-hand are both fascinating and frightening to watch.

Farnan explains and demonstrates various techniques used by skillful cheaters, known in the trade as "mechanics." The moves range from an easy but very hard to spot false cut, to some tricky false shuffles, and on to the mind-boggling overhand shuffle to stack the deck.

You do not actually have to see a complicated maneuver to know that something sneaky is going on. Being able to recognize certain basic procedures may be all the average card player needs to assess the fairness of the game.

For example, Farnan demonstrates a technique called the "mechanic's grip" that maximizes control of the deck. Mechanics place three fingers on one side of the deck, their thumb on the other side, and one finger cradling the outside edge. They can also do this grip with two fingers on both the side and the edge. The mechanic's grip is a clue that any card

player can learn to spot.

Everyone is familiar with the concept of marking a deck, but most people are as misinformed about it as they are about the other things one learns on the street. Mythology teaches that marks are made on the bicycle spokes of that well known brand of playing cards. The mechanics do everything they can to foster this rumor and then proceed to mark the edge of the design. They use a pen similar in color to the back of the cards. To the legions of spokewatchers this mark is nothing more than a printer's error. Farnan suggests riffling all four sides of the deck to see if there are any spots that move like dots on the pages of a notepad.

VIDEO DISCS

THE TOUCH OF LOVE—SENSUAL MASSAGE (1980). An MCA DiscoVision release. Produced and directed by Bruce Seth Green. Written by Ken Stewart and Kent Smith. Technical consultant, Sandra Hamilton. "For adults only." 27 minutes. \$19.95 retail. Chapter indexing, full special effects capability.

No magical aphrodisiac strokes or techniques will do for your partner what a well-done massage can, and THE TOUCH OF LOVE will teach you all the fundamentals.

Although the title of this disc is certainly provocative, the more salaciously-inclined members of the viewing audience will be in for a disappointment with *The Touch of Love—Sensual Massage*. Three attractive couples demonstrate body massage techniques in the nude, but there is no genital contact or manipulation. Not even any leering.

In fact, this disc is to pornography what sensuality is to brutality—both are physical in nature, but worlds apart in presentation.

There is much to be learned here. It is, after all, an instructional disc despite its provocative packaging. Massage

Farnan provides a great deal of interesting and useful information on cheating in poker, blackjack, and a New York hustle called "three card monty," the cardshark version of the shell game. He is charming and entertaining, which is no surprise considering his need to divert attention from the cards. Farnan does a good job of explaining and slow-motion demonstrating. He occasionally gets a little too Las Vegas with pithy phrases like "You can't beat Lady Luck." This comment chimed out again and again as he proceeded to cheat on and lose several blackjack hands in a row.

Even though they had all this good stuff, the creators of this somewhat cheezy production felt the need to

inject some *glitz* sex. Enter useless assistant Bonnie Berkley with such witty lines as, "Buddy, that's incredible!" The ironical Mr. Farnan remarks, "Do you make up those adjectives?" Miss Berkley then demonstrates how to shuffle cards and fingernails at the same time.

How To Avoid Being Cheated... At Cards gets my recommendation. People who do not play cards will like it for all the magical manual dexterity. It will give card players something to think about, and very possibly, something to practice. With repeated watchings they might even be able to master these techniques themselves. That's when I start betting on Scrabble.

—Marilyn Ferdinand

strokes are demonstrated for the face, head, chest, neck, arms, hands, legs, feet, buttocks, and back, taking into account the underlying muscular and skeletal anatomy of each.

I have studied and performed full body massage, and I know that the strokes demonstrated are well suited to inducing incredible feelings of relaxation and physical enjoyment. This is where the sensuality comes in—a relaxed person is a better lover, pure and simple. No magical aphrodisiac strokes or techniques will do for your partner what a well-done massage can. And this disc will teach you all the fundamentals.

The Touch of Love is an interesting videodisc from a technical standpoint as well. There are two audio tracks—one for music and one for narration/instruction. The videodisc allows you to cut out one or the other at will. To enjoy the music with no narration, you press the button on your machine to shut off audio track #1. Or you can listen to the narration alone by shutting off audio track #2.

I was impressed by the range of instruction the program included. Preparation is important in massage, and there were many useful points made along this line. Setting up a distraction-free environment, considerations of warmth, lighting, and oil to reduce skin friction were all covered.

Important precautions such as removal of jewelry, cutting long fingernails, and extracting contact lenses were included—for which I applaud the writers, Ken Stewart and Kent Smith.

There were some unusual suggestions for scenting the oil—instead of the old standbys like sandalwood and musk, I was interested to learn household items such as lemon juice and mint work as well.

Video again shows itself to be a

superior method of instruction. When I was learning massage, I did so from a book. The pictures were static, and it was hard for me to get the sense of exactly how each stroke was to be performed.

Watching massage on video not only instructs you on how to do a stroke, but shows how quickly it should be done and how much pressure should be used. It also minimizes confusion over descriptive words—for example, at one portion they "roll" the upper arm. It would be

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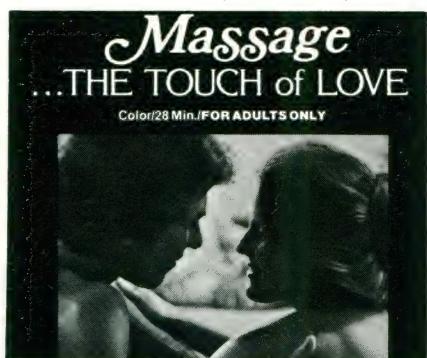
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almost impossible to describe this move in words; on videodisc—with the ability to instantly replay any scene—the stroke is easily learned.

I did have a few problems with this disc. Most notably, the chapter in-



dexing on the back of the jacket is wrong—there are 12 chapters, not 11, and all but the first chapter are behind by one number. This makes automatically locating specific portions of the disc difficult.

The narrator, Marika Turano, had a breathy, sensuous voice that did not quite work for me. She sounded like a cross between a tampon commercial and the tapes you will hear when you call an X-rated movie house for, ah, coming attractions. This is really a matter of taste; others may find her appealing.

The direction was jerky in spots, interrupting the continuity. In some instances a cut to a different angle was made in the middle of a stroke instead of waiting for the pause between strokes. This interrupted what should have been a flowing motion, and thus broke viewer concentration. Not all transitions were made with cuts—there were some beautiful fades from one angle to another that really captured the mood of relaxation and languid involvement.

The most outstanding drawback is that you cannot do a full body massage along with this disc. Only one arm and leg each are demonstrated; you must freeze-frame or stop the disc to work on your subject. You should take steps to avoid soiling your player or remote unit with oil-covered hands.

Although the jacket has big letters proclaiming "Adults Only," this is a disc I would want to show to teenagers as an example of sexual respect between men and women. Massage is the focusing of your full attention on another's pleasure—certainly a quality worth passing on.

Before viewing this disc, I was afraid the people in it would have that irritating emotional detachment porn actors have, but the couples in this program projected what looked to

me like sincere pleasure and enjoyment. For that alone I would recommend it as a refreshing presentation.

Again, there is no overt (or covert), sexual action. Yes, it may be titillating, but it is natural and un-self-conscious. And that is the best type of erotica—the kind that does not try.

—Ann DeLarye

GAMES

BRIDGE home video game, from Activision. \$21.95 retail.

If you do not already know how to play bridge, read no further. Activision's *Bridge* game will not teach you how to play. But if you wish to hone your skills without infuriating your partner—or if you are a bridge junkie suffering from withdrawal—this may be the game for you.

Slip the Activision cart into your

BRIDGE will not help you with your defensive skills. This is a major drawback.

Atari (or Sears) home video computer, and the machine deals you a randomly selected hand, one of hundreds of millions of possible card combinations.

This is strictly a one player game; the makers call it the "ultimate solitaire bridge game." You always start the bidding. Your computer partner never opens, and your opponents (also played by the computer) do not bid at all. The computer displays your hand during bidding but not your partner's. If you are bewildered by your electronic cohort's bidding technique, a booklet accompanying the game explains how it works or, you can simply change the difficulty switch and your partner's hand will appear on the screen.

The computer counts points according to the Goren method and recognizes the Stayman and Blackwood conventions. It will presume you have a certain number of points depending on your opening bid and will make certain assumptions about your suit distribution as the bidding proceeds; it will then bid accordingly.

Once the bidding is complete, your

hand and your partner's hand will appear on the screen, and you play both hands, regardless of whether you or the computer established the trump suit. The computer will play for the opposing team.

If you do not like your hand or the direction of the bidding, a new hand can be generated by hitting the reset switch. If you would like to replay the hand differently, just start the bidding over after the last trick has been played.

This video version of bridge is simple to learn, and all the bidding and play are easily controlled by one joystick. Pushing the stick forward raises the bid, and pulling it back lowers the bid. The bid is then entered by pressing the red controller button.

Play is controlled in a similar manner, except you move the stick from left to right to select the card you wish to play. The computer keeps a running tally and displays how many tricks you have taken and how many you need to make your bid.

There are seven variations to *Bridge*; three for bidding and playing that differ only in the minimum total team points dealt to you; 21 team points or more; 25 or more; and 29 or more. The four remaining variants are also based on minimum team points but eliminate the bidding phase; you select the contract without bidding.

Bridge will not help you with your defensive skills. You always establish the contract because your invisible opponents never bid. This presents one major drawback: a good portion of normal playing strategy is based upon the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents' hands revealed by their bidding. The art of finesse is severely impaired if you have no clues as to which of your opponents is likely to be holding the card you wish to draw out.

All in all, *Bridge* is a fun game. The computer does not pass on any juicy gossip during the game, nor does it scream or chase you around the table with a meat cleaver if you bid the wrong suit. *Bridge* is likely to improve your playing ability, and it may even save your marriage.

—Rick Oliver

BOOKS

A THOUSAND SUNDAYS, by Jerry Bowles. 213 pages. Published by G.P. Putnam's Sons. \$9.95.

There are many people who would argue that television was one of the major factors contributing to the death of vaudeville. Jerry Bowles, author of *A Thousand Sundays*, is not one of

them. He believes television was actually responsible for lengthening the life of vaudeville and bringing it into the seventies in the form of *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

In an anecdote-packed 213 pages, Bowles races through the 23 seasons (1948-1971) during which Sullivan provided the masses with an entertaining amalgam of acrobats, opera singers, rock stars, comics, dancing bears, athletes, and anybody or anything else guaranteed to pique the viewers' interest. As Bowles notes, Sullivan promised something for everybody. Indeed, the success of the show was based on the theory that if people didn't like what was on, they could wait five or 10 minutes and see something new. It was a format that met with spectacular success and kept the show thriving as one of television's longest-running variety series.

Obviously, Bowles had a lot of ground to cover, a problem he dealt with by concentrating only on what he found to be the show's highlights and most memorable moments.

The book is divided into three major segments: *The Toast Of The Town*; *Sullivan The Man*; and *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Each segment contains spin-off chapters such as: *The Beatles*, *The Funny Men*, or *The Accident* (which chronicles Sullivan's near fatal automobile crash in 1956).

Bowles paints a rather complex picture of Sullivan, the show's host, producer, and all around driving force. A sports writer turned gossip columnist for the New York *Daily News*, Sullivan desperately wanted to be a performer. After failing miserably as an actor/screenwriter in Hollywood and as a radio personality, he hit the big time in 1948 as host of *The Toast Of The Town* which later evolved into *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Chided unmercifully by critics for his stone face, jerky mannerisms, and lack of professional slickness, Sullivan's real talent was in his ability to book

timely acts and discover new talent. But we all know what Sullivan was like in front of the camera; it is when Bowles reveals his off stage persona that *A Thousand Sundays* starts to get interesting.

Vindictive and possessing an explosive temper, Sullivan's command of certain expletives was legendary. His demand for complete creative control over the show alienated most of his employees. It was not until his son-in-law, Bob Precht, took over as producer that Sullivan began to relinquish some power. Worried that his dour demeanor would put viewers off, Sullivan went to great lengths to make sure that on the air he came across as a pleasant, easy-going fellow who could take a joke as well as the next guy.

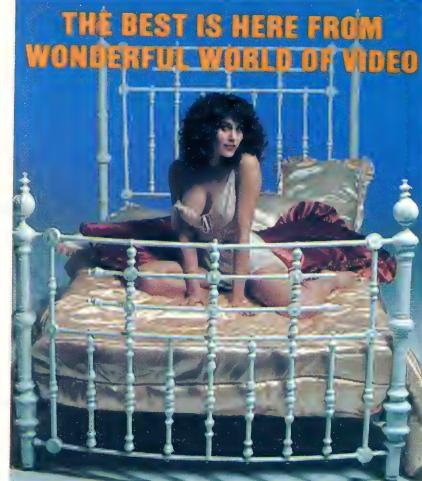
During the early years of the show he hired a professional heckler to put him down from the audience. He also encouraged impersonators to do their Sullivan bits to show that he could laugh at himself. And finally there was his relationship with Topo Gigo, the cute little Italian mouse. All of these were carefully calculated moves to show Sullivan's warmth and humility.

Bowles also does a good job of revealing some of the common misconceptions about the show. Sullivan never said "reeeee big shew" (this was invented by impersonator Will Jordan), and Elvis Presley did not make his television debut on the Sullivan show—he appeared on Steve Allen's NBC show two months earlier. Sullivan had the opportunity to book the Presley debut but felt that the singer was only trying to "disrupt the morals of kids" and that "his whole appeal was sensual."

Sullivan's feuds with Jackie Mason, Arthur Godfrey, Steve Allen and many others are all well documented here. Bowles' 10 page account of Sullivan's long-running and highly publicized tiff with Jack Parr is as tiresome as the whole dispute was trivial (it centered on how much talent was getting paid to appear on the respective shows). The whole incident was nothing more than an excuse for two supercharged personalities to flex their considerable egos in public and should have been dealt with in half the space.

Sullivan died of cancer in 1974 so Bowles was forced to rely on old interviews, books, and articles to glean whatever information he could about Sullivan the man. Marlo Lewis, the show's co-producer with Sullivan for the first 13 years, refused to be interviewed for the book. One cannot help but feel the gap left by her missing insight.

Nevertheless, Bowles has done a



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commendable job of sifting through the thousands of hours of programming, hundreds of stories and anecdotes, and countless ups and downs of a career and show that spanned 23 years. Some readers are bound to feel slighted when they discover that an appearance by a favorite performer was left out of the book, but all things considered, *A Thousand Sundays* presents a complete, behind the scenes picture of Sullivan and his years as a "vaudeo" pioneer.

—Steven Bogart

X-RATED TAPES

ELECTRIC BLUE-002 (1981). Produced and directed by Adam Cole, "presented" by Marilyn Chambers. Distributed by Kenyon Video. 60 minutes. \$59.95 retail.

Electric Blue is not what has come to be known as "hardcore," adult-oriented entertainment. However, it should not be confused with "simulated" R-rated presentations. The best way to describe *Electric Blue* is that it bears a similarity to girlie magazines like *Cheri* and *Velvet*. Interestingly enough, *Electric Blue* is indeed a regularly issued magazine. The "002" in the title refers to the fact that this is its second issue.

The features begin with a somewhat interesting nude disco number performed by 10 very good looking young ladies. In fact, a couple of them are quite stunning and all of them are, of course, extremely uninhibited in their performances. This part does tend to drag on a bit; it should have been a few minutes shorter.

Next we are treated to a photo session with the interaction of the photographer and a nude female model continuing for five minutes or so. At this point a new model enters the scene: his name is "Moby Dick" and it is a well chosen name to say the least, if you get my drift. If not, here is another hint: he appears to be 17 inches . . . at least. This gentleman would be a prime candidate for *Real People* or *That's Incredible* if network programming were a bit more risqué. This interesting segment has to be seen to be believed.

Added to the sexually oriented parts of the magazine are two non-fiction presentations: one concerns the history of spectacular car crashes during races, the other is about suicide prevention measures at San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. The former was a bit strange. There are perhaps 30 car crashes set to classical music; the combination results in a rather gory mechanical ballet. The suicide pre-

vention article is interesting, but the footage of a body being fished from the water tends to take the edge off the more erotic features on the tape.

Rounding off the issue is an extremely well produced lesbian scene with two gorgeous women, followed by a section called "nude wives." Nude wives (and girlfriends) indeed! Here's how it works: *Electric Blue's* "readers" send in video tapes of their nude female "significant others." If the editors deem the presentation of sufficient merit, the couple receives \$500 and some interesting public exposure. This, for me, was the most interesting part of the issue.

A word about Marilyn Chambers: I have to admit I am getting a bit bored with her. Though she puts on an interesting performance between articles, and is featured in her own nude disco scene, she strikes me as not truly sincere . . . a bit put on.

Despite the fact that *Electric Blue* is one of our advertisers and therefore at risk of sounding self-serving, I have to say I really enjoyed this tape. It was of a high quality from a technical, as well as aesthetic point of view. And although it is not hardcore, it is perhaps the most sensual sexual presentation I have seen since *Emmanuelle*. I highly recommend *Electric Blue 002* for your erotic viewing pleasure.

—T.B. Martin

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538 • DIARY OF A NYMPH COLOR This girl has a problem—she simply can't get enough... of anything! Boys, girls, next door neighbors, herself... it really doesn't matter as long as it's sex! With several fine Lesbian scenes, double couples, Peeping Toms, voyeurism and one-on-one. 1hr. Beta 2: \$49.95

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NEW RELEASES

(Continued from page 55)
during World War II to redeem themselves in combat. With Lee Marvin, Ernest Borgnine, Jim Brown, Charles Bronson, and Donald Sutherland. Directed by Robert Aldrich.

High Noon—(1952), an ungrateful town turns its back on a retiring sheriff, Gary Cooper, when he is challenged by a killer released from prison. With Grace Kelly, Lloyd Bridges, Thomas Mitchell, Katy Jurado, Otto Kruger, and Lon Chaney. Directed by Fred Zinnemann.

Patton—(1970), George C. Scott as the eccentric and brilliant general in this winner of eight Academy Awards. With Karl Malden, Stephen Young, Michael Strong, Frank Latimore, James Edwards, Lawrence Dobkin, and Michael Bates. Directed by Franklin Schaffner.

Shane—(1953), Alan Ladd stars as a gunfighter who defends a family of homesteaders and becomes the idol of their son. Won an Oscar for cinematography. With Jean Arthur, Van Heflin, Jack Palance, Brandon de Wilde, Edgar Buchanan, and Elisha Cook, Jr. Directed by George Stevens.

Stalag 17—(1953), William Holden won an Oscar for this one as an American POW suspected by his cohorts of being a German spy. Also starring Don Taylor, Otto Preminger, Robert Strauss, Harvey Lembeck, and Sig Ruman. Directed by Billy Wilder.

Show Boat—(1951), musical version of the novel by Edna Ferber about life on the Mississippi in the early 1900s. Starring Kathryn Grayson, Ava Gardner, Howard Keel, Joe E. Brown, Marge and Gower Champion, Agnes Moorehead, Robert Sterling, and William Warfield. Directed by Stanley Donen.

Singin' In The Rain—(1952), acclaimed musical spoof of Hollywood in the early days of talkies. Musical numbers directed by star Gene Kelly; with Debbie Reynolds, Donald O'Connor, Jean Hagen, Cyd Charisse, Madge Blake, and Millard Mitchell. Directed by Stanley Donen.

Saturday Night Fever—(1977), the movie that transformed John Travolta from a Sweathog into a disco-hopping, white-suited Brooklyn youth. Also with Karen Lynn Gorney, Barry Miller, Joseph Cali, Paul Pape, and Donna Pescow.

Soundtrack by the Bee Gees.
Directed by John Badham.

M*A*S*H—(1970), the highly-acclaimed, irreverent, anti-war comedy about the goings on of a wild medical unit during the Korean War. Starring Donald Sutherland, Elliott Gould, Tom Skerritt, Sally Kellerman, Robert Duvall, Jo Ann Pflug, Rene Auberjonois, Roger Bowen, Gary Burghoff, Fred Williamson, and John Schuck. Directed by Robert Altman.

The Seven Year Itch—(1955), Marilyn Monroe and Tom Ewell star in this comedy about what happens when Ewell's wife goes on a summer vacation and Marilyn moves in upstairs. With Evelyn Keyes, Sonny Tufts, Victor Moore, Oscar Homolka, Carolyn Jones, and Doro Merande. Directed by Billy Wilder.

Foul Play—(1978), comedy about an innocent woman who gets caught up in a bizarre murder plot and the detective who falls for her. Starring Goldie Hawn, Chevy Chase, Burgess Meredith, Dudley Moore, Rachel Roberts, Eugene Roche, Marilyn Sokol, and Billy Barty. Directed by Colin Higgins.

Starting Over—(1979), Burt Reynolds stars in this comedy about a divorced man who is still hung up on his ex-wife. Also stars Jill Clayburgh, Candice Bergen, Charles Durning, Frances Sternhagen, Austin Pendleton, and Mary Kay Place. Directed by Alan J. Pakula.

Heaven Can Wait—(1978), Warren Beatty plays a good-natured football player who is accidentally taken to heaven before his time and given a return to life in another man's body. Also starring Julie Christie, Jack Warden, Dyan Cannon, Charles Grodin, James Mason, Buck Henry, and Vincent Gardenia. Directed by Warren Beatty and Buck Henry.

Love Story—(1970), all the schmaltz you ever wanted with this tragic love story about a boy, a girl, and death. Starring Ali McGraw, Ryan O'Neal, Ray Milland, John Marley, and Katherine Balfour. Directed by Arthur Hiller.

The Godfather—(1972), the now-famous story of the life and times of Don Corleone, patriarch of a Mafia family. Stars Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, James Caan, Richard Castellano, Robert Duvall, Sterling Hayden, John Marley, Richard Conte, Diane Keaton, and Al Martino. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

The Godfather, Part II—(1974), the sequel, which contrasts the lives of the new Godfather, Al Pacino, and the early life of his father. With Robert Duvall, Diane Keaton, Robert DeNiro, John Cazale, Talia Shire, Lee Strasberg, and Michael V. Gazzo. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

Rocky—(1976), Sylvester Stallone as Rocky, the two-bit almost washed up fighter who gets a shot at the World Heavyweight Championship and runs with it. Won Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Editing. Directed by John G. Avildsen.

20,000 Leagues Under The Sea—(1954), wonderful Walt Disney fantasy based on the Jules Verne novel about the power-mad Captain Nemo and his wondrous submarine. Starring Kirk Douglas, James Mason, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre, Robert J. Wilke, and Carleton Young. Directed by Richard Fleischer.

The Love Bug—(1969), Disney comedy about a Volkswagen with a mind and personality. Starring Dean Jones, Michele Lee, Buddy Hackett, David Tomlinson, Joe Flynn, and Iris Adrian. Directed by Robert Stevenson.

Elephant Man—(1980), based on the true story of John Merrick, the much-celebrated "elephant man" afflicted with a horribly disfiguring disease in late 19th Century London. Stars John Hurt, Anne Bancroft, and Anthony Hopkins. Directed by David Lynch.

Ordinary People—(1980), Robert Redford makes his directorial debut in this excellent screen adaption of the Judith Guest novel about a family coming apart at the seams. Starring Mary Tyler Moore, Donald Sutherland, and Timothy Hutton.

Urban Cowboy—(1980), John Travolta portrays a factory worker who breaks his daily boredom by stepping out at night in cowboy duds and hanging out in a bar with a mechanical bull. Directed by James Bridges.

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The Thing—(1951), James Arness as the "Thing" turns in a surprisingly good performance in this science fiction thriller about scientists in an Arctic station who discover a creature from—you guessed it—Outer Space. With Margaret Sheridan, Kenneth Tobey, Robert Cornwaite, Douglas Spencer. Directed by Christian Nyby.

VINTAGE VIDEO

By Larry Charet

OF ALL THE DIFFERENT types of video addicts, the movie buff is probably the most mistreated of all. Not only must he endure the constant scissoring of favorite scenes by local and/or network editors and censors, but he is also at the mercy of local stations when it comes to the choice of films seen.

Movies are syndicated in much the same manner as television series—but with one important difference. When buying a series, the station gets exactly what it wants: that is, X number of episodes to be stripped into an existing hole in the schedule. Movies, however, are purchased in "packages." To obtain the maybe 20 feature films they are interested in airing, the station might have to buy them along with perhaps 50 other films they do not particularly want.

Superstation WGN in Chicago, for example, was besieged by viewers this past holiday season for not airing the classic *White Christmas*, a movie that had been a staple in yuletide past. WGN's contract for the package of films that includes *White Christmas*, however, had expired and the station chose not to renew.

White Christmas is syndicated to local outlets nationally by Paramount-TV as part of a group of films called "Portfolio Five." Had WGN renewed its contract for these films to get *White Christmas*, they would have also had to buy such winners as *Arizona Bushwackers*, *Deadly Bees*, *Hostile Guns*, *The Pigeon That Took Rome*, *Sebastian*, *The Treasure of San Gennaro*, *Chuka*, and *Man-Trap*. These films probably did not garner good ratings on their initial airings so why should WGN waste its precious airtime running them again?

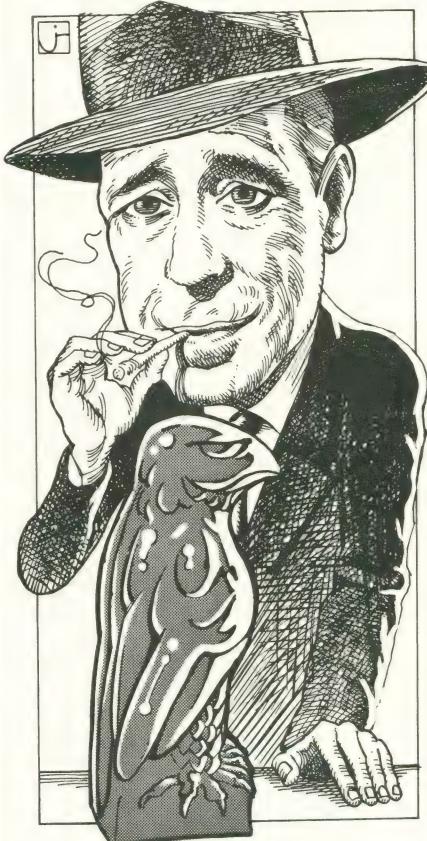
The reverse of the *White Christmas* situation also exists, again on WGN-TV. One of its top-rated movie draws is the classic Bogart flick *The Maltese Falcon*, which is shown several times a year. *Falcon* is part of a 198 title Warner Brothers' package. Since the station does not want to relinquish its rights to *The Maltese Falcon*, it is forced to run and rerun endlessly many of the remaining 197 films. Even with a 24-hour a day schedule, there are only so many timeslots that can be

Whither White Christmas

filled, so the viewer must suffer through the same titles over and over again.

Occasionally, a syndicator will allow a station to buy only the particular titles from a film package that it wants, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

How, then, can you see some of the movies that your local station will not buy? The same rules apply here that



did in my column concerning old television series (in the December 1980 *Video Action*). If you own a VCR, trade local editions of *TV Guide* with friends or relatives in other cities. You will be surprised at the selection of films being shown elsewhere that are

not run in your market.

Be warned, however, of local stations' propensity for cutting movies to shreds. Make sure you have a copy of a good film reference book, like *TV Movies* by Leonard Maltin (Signet paperback, \$3.95) or *Movies on TV* by Steven Schever (Bantam paperback, \$2.95), and check the film's original running time as listed in the book. If a 110 minute feature is being shown in a two hour slot, you can be certain it will be heavily cut to allow for the more than 10 minutes of commercials (consider a minimum of six minutes of commercials per half-hour).

Some stations insult their viewers by shoehorning that same 110 minute film into a 90 minute time period. Avoid this at all costs, unless you want to see only four of *The Magnificent Seven*, or perhaps, *The Dirty Half-D dozen*.

I hope this adds to your television movie viewing pleasure. Down in front, please.

* * * * And now on to this month's Vintage Video questions.

Q. Jack Hirschman of Forest Hills, N.Y. asks about the availability of the television series *Racket Squad*, *Gang Busters*, *Winky Dink and You*, *Captain Video*, *I Led Three Lives*, *Sgt. Bilko*, and *Superman*.

A. *Racket Squad* and *Gang Busters* are not currently being shown anywhere and I doubt that these series are even in syndication at this time. A *Winky Dink* show is available on video cassette (reviewed in the February *Video Action*) from Shokus Video, P.O. Box 8434, Van Nuys, CA 91409 for \$39 in the Beta X-2 format and \$41 for VHS SP cassette. There are no complete episodes of *Captain Video* around, but a portion of one soon will be available in tandem with other space shows from the 1950s on a video cassette called *They Went to the Stars—Sci-Fi When TV Was Live*, from Starlog Video, or ask your local video dealer about it.

I Led Three Lives is occasionally shown on Ft. Lauderdale's famous all-night show of old movies and television shows (Channel 51). *Bilko* is currently conning Colonel Hall on

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Channel 4 in Milwaukee and Channel 12 in New Orleans. *Superman* is shown in many areas, including Channel 9 in Chicago, Channel 13 in Los Angeles, and Milwaukee's Channel 4.

Q. Jack also asks about the Series, Serials and Packages book mentioned in this column in the January Video Action.

A. This volume is available annually from the Broadcast Information Bureau, Inc., 100 Lafayette Drive, Syosset, N.Y. 11791. Write to them for their 1981 price information, although it might be a little more than you are willing to pay. The book is aimed at television station executives and you might be able to get an old copy from your local station if you ask as they probably toss out the 1980 edition when the new volume arrives.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Bob Reed of Commerce City, Colorado adds these Hitchcock-directed segments of the famous director's show to the index in our January issue:

Poison, aired 10-5-58, starred James Donald, Wendall Corey, Arnold Moss, and Weaver Levy.

Mrs. Bixby and the Coloneus Cat, aired 9-27-60, starred Audrey Meadows and Les Tremayne.

The Horseplayer, aired 3-14-61, starred Claude Rains.

Bob also informs us that it was Richard Hart, not John who played television's first *Ellery Queen* in 1950.

'Till next month.

TV OBSCURA

Continuing our list of syndicated shows showing up in a limited number of markets:

Wyatt Earp: Channel 26, Houston, TX

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Fractured Flickers: Channel 12, Denver-Bloomfield, CO

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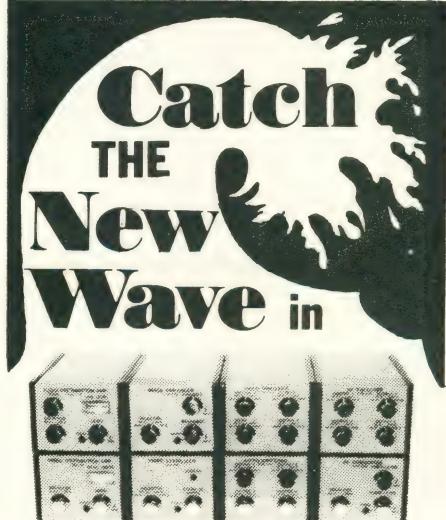
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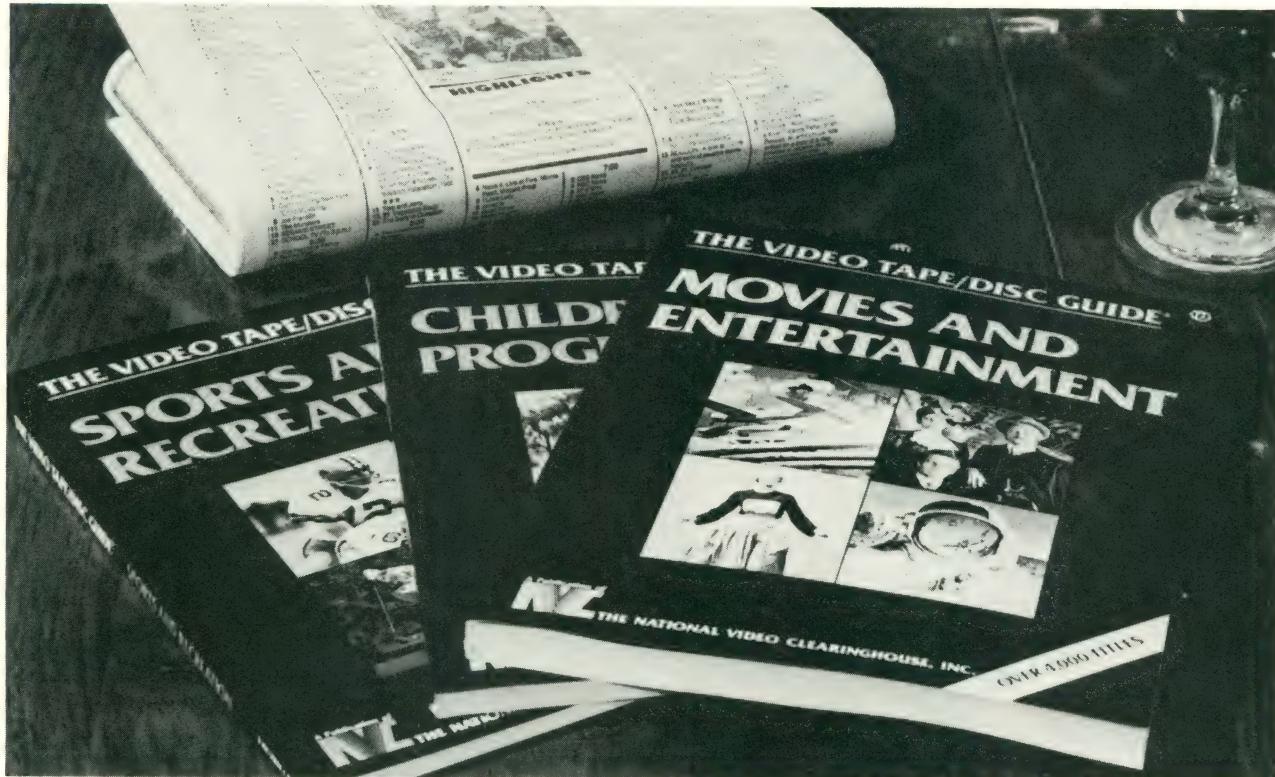
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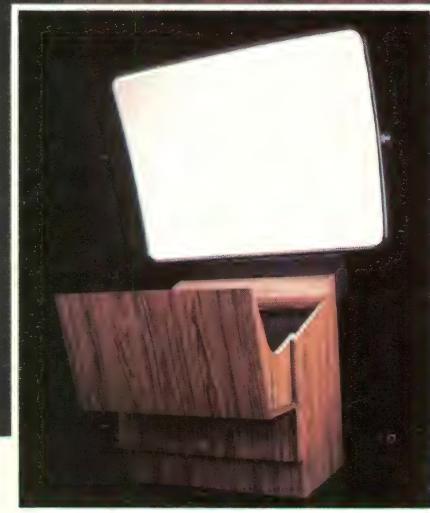
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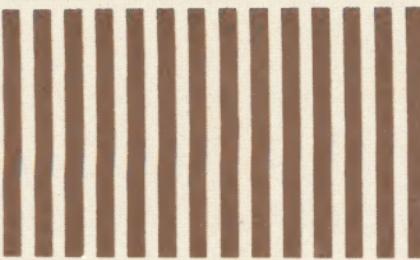
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